

LIBRARY CAMPAIGN

SUPPORTING FRIENDS AND USERS OF LIBRARIES



SUMMER 2022
No. 103



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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To advance the lifelong education of the public by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of public libraries through the activities of friends and user groups.



The Library Campaign

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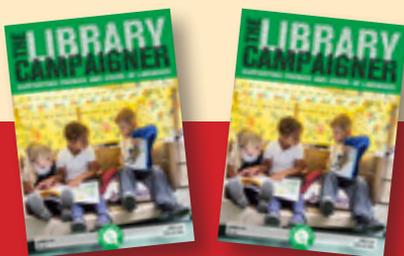
of local

FRIENDS AND USER GROUPS

with their contact details, on our website.

If you know of a new (or old!) group that is not on our list, please notify:

thelibrarycampaign@gmail.com



As usual, we've sent you an extra copy of this magazine. Please take the time to pass it on, or place it somewhere people will see it...

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Andrew Coburn Essex

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Geoffrey Dron Bolton

Bob Goodrick London

The following organisations send representatives to attend steering group meetings:

Unison,

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP).

WHO'S WHO?

Quick guide to some of the many things relevant to libraries ...

1964 Act (Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964) says all local authorities have a statutory duty to provide a public library service, which must be 'comprehensive and efficient' and available to all who wish to use it. Libraries are NOT optional. It gives the Secretary of State power to enquire – and intervene – if standards fall short. These powers have barely been used.

ACE (Arts Council England) now has 'responsibility for supporting and developing libraries'. As yet unclear what that means in practice.

CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals): the professional body for librarians in all types of library.

CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) collects figures on library performance and on user satisfaction.

MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government): the central government department responsible for local government. It provides most of local councils' funding. It does not determine how much of it is spent on libraries.

DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport): sets central government's policy on libraries (among other things), but does not fund them. It is headed by the Secretary of State, with one minister more directly responsible for libraries (among other things).

LGA (Local Government Association) lobbies on behalf of local government. Does some useful work on public libraries, but ultimately sides with councils, not library users.

MLA (Museums, Libraries & Archives Council): ACE's predecessor.

NLT (National Literacy Trust): charity 'dedicated to building a literate nation' – which includes promoting reading for pleasure. Huge source of information, campaigns and projects.

LIBRARIES CONNECTED (formerly Society of Chief Librarians) advises LGA on libraries. Does a lot of useful work, including research and resources, but tends to stick to 'quiet diplomacy'.

UNISON: the trade union for most public library staff. Good research and promotional materials.

TRA (The Reading Agency): charity to develop reading, especially via libraries. Dozens of projects to promote books, especially to key groups like children, reluctant readers, ethnic minorities etc.

Taskforce (the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce): set up and funded by the DCMS to lead development following the Sieghart report 2014.

They said I do WHAT?



As we go to press, newspapers are advising sweltering readers to flock to air-conditioned public buildings ‘such as libraries’. Good luck with that.

Worse still, local councils are – in all seriousness – planning to use libraries this winter as warm shelters for people who can’t afford to heat their homes.

This is shameful. Yet it is not seen as particularly strange. It might even help persuade councils to keep libraries open...

Predicted levels of deprivation are reaching surreal levels. No political party is really getting to grips with the underlying problems. But there are signs that the penny is starting to drop among the public.

Not among the many who have suffered under austerity since 2010. They already know. So do public libraries who – as always – have rallied round with masses of practical help, on their shoe-string budgets.

But the comfortably-off are now finding that nothing works. They can’t get a passport, or a flight, or a driving licence, or a policeman, or a GP, or even an ambulance...

The cover photo comes from Reading for Pleasure, a lively programme run by the Open University. It is aimed mainly at schools (including encouraging teachers to enjoy reading more!). But there’s plenty of general ideas, information about books etc. Newsletter here: <https://ourfp.org/newsletter-signup>

It’s a simple concept – reading just because it’s a pleasure. (Don’t tell anyone, but it brings huge and measurable gains in literacy, mental health and all-round attainment.)

Libraries make pleasure the core of what they do. Or should. What better thing to be famous for?

An ambition dating back to David Cameron has been to have ‘a small state’. Well, we’ve got one now. That’s one underlying problem.

Another big one is disinformation. Campaigners are used to local councils using dubious facts and dodgy ‘consultations’. Social media publish and amplify daft and harmful ideas. Prominent people cry ‘Fake news!’ when the facts don’t flatter them – and it works. They also tell lies quite a lot.

Here again, libraries have a place at the forefront. While schools are getting to grips with informing children, there’s not much focus on adults. Yet libraries have a unique status as trusted, unbiased sources of information who are, quite simply, not trying to sell you stuff. This needs to be expanded big-time.

Meanwhile, there are already signs of danger. This summer has seen a rash of protests against the popular and well-established tradition of Drag Queen Story Time. Talk about misinformed! Some libraries saw (bigger) counter-protests turn up; some cancelled; some re-scheduled at a semi-secret alternative venue; some went online or hybrid. Libraries adapted cleverly, and fast. As they always do.

So let’s end by indulging a justified rant from CILIP CEO Nick Poole. Reform, one of those think tanks, came up with a clever new idea: fund councils to ‘co-design open-access hubs to support young people’s mental health’. Nick tweeted: ‘So ... a library, then?’

‘Apparently the solution to society’s ills lies in: loneliness hubs, mental health hubs, literacy hubs – but not libraries. Is someone in government having a laugh? Why, oh why, keep reinventing the wheel?’

We sympathise. But maybe there’s a message for libraries here. Too many people still don’t know what they do. Especially people with influence, it seems. How about a national publicity campaign?

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The Reading Agency has 70 years’ worth of reading suggestions and back-up information.

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Campaign news

The calm before the storm? Lockdown woke up many councils to the amazing things libraries do for them, at amazingly low cost. So, amazingly brutal mass closure plans are still fairly rare. Will this remain true as costs escalate, and people need even more help? We will find out soon enough. Meanwhile, here's an update on some current campaigns.

Essex

The fight dates back to 2018, when the council proposed options – including closing all but 15 of its 74 branches. The rest would be run by volunteers, if at all. That was killed off with a huge campaign by SOLE (Save Our Libraries Essex). But SOLE is keeping watch for any sign the idea might be revived. Andrew Coburn reports.

During the worst of the pandemic Essex County Council (ECC), at least in theory, was still trying to get volunteer or other groups to come forward to run libraries. This failed.

Only one proposal was ever made public: for New City College to run Debden library in Loughton. The library is already housed on college premises, so this seemed likely to come off. But the plan collapsed over (we understand) inability to come to a legal agreement.

In the May 2021 local elections, the council remained Tory. But the new leader sacked the Cabinet member for libraries. His deputy (new to her post) was given responsibility for libraries among others things.

Shortly after, they announced plans for a new 'strategic policy' for libraries – by implication replacing the closure (etc) proposals. It was put out to consultation.

Campaigners in SOLE (Save Our Libraries Essex) reacted by coming up with a 10-point plan on what the new strategy should contain. SOLE asked to



meet the Cabinet member to discuss this, but she would only hold online public meetings that anyone could attend (this SOLE did).

When the draft strategy was published in autumn 2021, it did not contain any commitment not to hand libraries to volunteers. However, the new leader and deputy had said that no library will close.

New strategy

SOLE tried to get them to go further and commit to no more volunteer run libraries.

The final version of the strategy was published in spring 2022. It still has nothing to say on volunteer-run libraries. There is at least a page thanking volunteers for their work in the existing service (SOLE has no problem with this.)

The public's response to the consultation also persuaded ECC to put some more specific thanks and references to paid staff in the final document.

The new strategy includes a commitment to support literacy in both children and adults. This was one of SOLE's 10 points. Literacy areas have sprung up in many Essex libraries. (Some are very prominent. This may seem strange if someone wants to get confidential information, particularly about adult literacy.)

There is a commitment to refurbishments, some of which have already begun. The revamped Harlow library opened in June – though it occupies only half the space of the old library.

A new library has opened in Wickford. Shenfield and Loughton are also to have new libraries. Both will have flats above them, and there is concern that the library may be a poor relation.

Volunteers

There is a statement about increasing online resources, but little about traditional library stock – books! ECC has joined The Library Consortium (19 library services in London, Surrey and Luton that share access to all their stock). This should be a good thing unless it means longer waits for in-demand books, or induces ECC to spend less on books because 'someone in the consortium will have it'.

SOLE continues to monitor what is going on. There is already one library fully run by volunteers. A couple more use volunteers for some hours when paid staff are not there.

SOLE has been interested to note how often they have had to close, presumably because volunteers were not available as planned.



We are also keeping an eye on availability of books and the time it takes to get them if reserved (including copies from the consortium).

Recently ECC has advertised two senior jobs in the library service – a service development manager and a delivery plan manager. Regrettably both of these are one year contracts. It will be interesting to see if they produce discernible results.

The threat to close libraries, or have them run by volunteers, may have receded. But the cost of living crisis, and its potential effect on local authority finances, is giving SOLE reason to keep an eye on what ECC is doing. Campaigners report their experiences on SOLE's Facebook and Twitter accounts. Watch this space?

Stockport

Here, the council wanted to move the service from the beautiful Grade II listed (Carnegie) Central Library. The new venue – empty space in a council-owned shopping centre that needs a boost, and has levelling up money. Public reaction has been mixed. It certainly isn't a mandate for change. In May, the council itself changed – from Labour to LibDem. But is its 'new' plan really any different? Deborah Hind from Stockport United Against Austerity, the chief campaign group, reports.

We have campaigned for two years, along with other organisations, to save Stockport's 109 year old Carnegie Central Library, with all of its services.



We were overjoyed when a full council meeting, in January this year, voted to object to the Cabinet's resolution to end the services at the Carnegie and move them to the council-owned Merseyway shopping centre.

The Cabinet pressed ahead regardless, despite petitions totalling over 8,000 signatures, opposition in the council's own public consultation, and opposition from three scrutiny committees.



In May, however, the old Cabinet was ousted. Shortly afterwards, the new council leader announced that the plan would be reviewed.

We wrote to him calling for the review to be 'an ambitious, not a defensive, one'. We asked that consideration be given to redeveloping the heritage Central Library. Other towns manage to preserve and upgrade their historic libraries for the future.

We also called for the proposals from the review to be put to public consultation.

We were extremely disappointed to receive a reply on 26 July, outlining a new plan but categorically stating that there was no intention of putting it to consultation.

Consultation

The new plan does not involve redeveloping the Carnegie library. It even retains the previous proposal to move many of the services, including the Local Archives and Heritage Library, to the shopping centre.

The remaining book stock at the Carnegie would comprise only 'the most popular adult fiction titles'; 'a selection of non-fiction that will complement the adult education services' and 'a selection of junior and children's fiction'.

There is also a plan to move Stockport's continuing education service into the Carnegie from another Grade II listed building, the former Hollywood Park school. There is nothing about the intended fate of the vacated school building.

Finally, the new plan would see almost a third of opening hours at the Carnegie being unstaffed. This system has already been introduced in a number of branch libraries. The proportion of unstaffed to staffed hours subsequently increased, purely to make budgetary cuts. We thus have good grounds to believe that this plan may herald a future of further cuts for our historic Central Library.

We have written to all councillors, calling them to support public consultation. This, we think, would be entirely consistent with the stand they took in January and is appropriate in view of the far reaching nature of the new plan. We will petition and campaign for this demand.

Hendon

Hendon Library was in danger of being turned into Middlesex University's business centre. The service would be moved to a glass box in a massive new 'Hendon Hub' dominated by the university. Then, in May, the council (Barnet) changed from Conservative to Labour. Save Hendon sees a possible change of attitude – but is not counting on it...

Richard Lecoat was due to mount a judicial review of the lawfulness of the SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) that supported the wholesale redevelopment of Hendon. The new Labour council asked for a postponement so it could review the case.

Then it decided not to pursue formal adoption of the SPD. It seems likely they didn't want the lawfulness of the plan tested in court...

However, planning applications based on it had been rubber-stamped. They have not gone away.

Viability

Save Hendon says: 'One has been referred to the Mayor's Office for review. Three others are being officially assessed to decide if they should be "called in" by the Secretary of State for further scrutiny.

'The emerging Local Plan (of which the Hendon Hub is merely one component) has also been scheduled for further "examination" by the Secretary of State's office.

'So the Hendon Hub may yet be subject to change, regardless of the council's, or the university's, intentions...

'What we can report is that Labour have approached Save Hendon. Discussions regarding how best to move forward have commenced.

'They have agreed to bring in an independent financial expert to assess the economic viability of the Hendon Hub project. We feel greatly encouraged by this.

Trust eroded

'What is NOT yet clear is whether it is Labour's intention to action the planning applications...

'With trust having been severely eroded under the previous administration, we feel that it now becomes the responsibility of both the council and the university to demonstrate that their claims of wanting to listen to residents are both genuine and meaningful.

'We very much look forward to them doing precisely that.'

Digital? Not so fast...

Some local councils are proposing library cuts on the grounds that library usage is 'going digital' – especially since Covid-19. A solid piece of research suggests otherwise.

A team led by David McMenemy, senior lecturer in Information Studies at Glasgow University, looked at libraries' experience in the UK and overseas. The full report (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2022.2058860>) has plenty of carefully-referenced details. But it does not suggest that digital is the way to go.

For one thing, most libraries managed to keep providing some degree of personal contact, and some kind of service lending physical books. For another, users did not find e-loans an acceptable substitute. Despite a sometimes spectacular increase in e-book loans, this 'did not come close to mitigating the drop in physical borrowing...

'Even during the main Covid-19 year, the average library member was borrowing over twice the number of physical as e-books.'

The study quotes conclusions by Libraries Connected in the early stages of the lockdown: 'In the UK, e-lending increased. By the end of July 2020, 3.5 million more e-books had been loaned. But that increase does not make up for physical lending, the numbers of which are much larger.

'Our data proves this initial assertion beyond any reasonable doubt. Research related to Scottish public libraries also highlighted the importance of the physical spaces.

'The profession should be clear, then, that any moves to close or reduce physical libraries based on the drop in physical lending versus a rise in e-lending, would be built on erroneous evidence of the impact of the latter.'

The study's own conclusion is: 'The admitted good news story – the rise in e-book lending – could be seen by some as a shift, or digital turn, in terms of public library services. One that could be responded to by a reconsideration of the importance of, and need for, physical library buildings.

'However, the data clearly indicates that even when library patrons had no choice but to use digital services if they wished to borrow a book, the vast majority chose not to...'

'The Covid-19 pandemic had various effects on UK public library services. Many institutions had to close their doors for a substantial amount of time in 2020 and 2021.

'This global experience for libraries has been unprecedented. In considering just how public libraries were affected, we can discern that the lending, and presumably reading, of physical books likely took the biggest hit in the history of the public library service.

'The rise in e-lending was a good news story that took up only a small percentage of this slack...'

'More research needs to be undertaken related to just how the lockdowns and lack of access to

Early years evidence

It appeared too late to analyse in this issue. But if you want evidence or bright ideas about libraries' work with young children, this is a massive resource.

The Local Government Association sent teams of 'peers' to conduct mini-reviews in eight local councils: Bradford, Dorset, Leeds, Reading, St Helens, Swindon, Tameside and Wakefield.

The work was supported by Libraries Connected and ASCEL (Association of Senior Children's & Education Librarians).

The result was an impressive list of strengths, ideas for improvements and case studies of good practice. Very comprehensive, very useful.

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/how-council-library-services-can-support-children-and-families-earliest-years>

public library facilities impacted on citizens throughout the world. The loss of access to reading materials is clearly a significant issue, but so also was the loss of the physical space that communities value.

'It is to be hoped that as the pandemic subsides, public libraries can emerge and be reinvigorated.'

TRAIL DATES

In issue 102, we mentioned the slightly mysterious 'Storytrail' events taking place in libraries as part of the arts-and-tech Unboxed festival. Here are the dates and venues.

StoryTrails	
OMAGH Omagh Library 1 - 2 July	SWANSEA Swansea Library 10 - 11 August
DUNDEE Dundee Central Library 7 - 8 July	NEWPORT Newport Central Library 13 - 14 August
DUMFRIES Dumfries Library 12 - 13 July	BRISTOL Bristol Central Library 20 - 21 August
BLACKPOOL Blackpool Central Library 16 - 17 July	SWINDON Swindon Central Library 27 - 28 August
BRADFORD City Library 22 - 23 July	SLOUGH Slough Library 3 - 4 September
SHEFFIELD Sheffield Central Library 27 - 28 July	LIMBETH Limbeth Tote Library 10 - 11 September
LINCOLN Lincoln Library 30 - 31 July	LEWISHAM Lewisham Library 17 - 18 September
WOLVERHAMPTON Wolverhampton Central Library 6 - 7 August	



Kudos to Somerset Libraries for setting up at Glastonbury this year! They tweeted: 'Families are loving the pop-up story-times. Come and say hello over by the John Peel Stage. You can even join up today and start downloading e-audiobooks for free!'

Your council's money

There's no doubt that local councils have been shamelessly clobbered by cuts for years, while often having to spend extra on doing things central government should do. All the same, it's sometimes a good idea to check out their claims.

You can look up any English local authority on this website – compiled by the House of Commons library. It doesn't cover capital. Crucially, it includes actual 'spending power'.

It explains: 'Local authorities vary in terms of the amount of money they raise through locally generated income, and the proportion of business rates they retain for themselves. We have therefore also provided each local authority's spending power, as this can be more



meaningful in terms of the total revenue local authorities have at their disposal.'

Read with care the various provisos. But you may find the figures very useful...

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/local-authority-data-finances>

Canny canines

North Yorkshire libraries have a new reading aid – dogs! An idea to copy? Alison Tutill, outreach librarian, reports: 'Reading to dogs has been proven to help children develop literacy skills and build confidence, through both the calming effect of the dog's presence and the fact that the dog will appear to be listening to the child read without being judgemental or critical.'

'We had all ages coming to read or meet the dogs, such as a 22-year-old man with learning difficulties whose mum wanted him to come to meet the dogs and interact with someone. He came every time and started to form words.'

'We had a six year old child who wouldn't interact with other children, who had her mum in tears because she chose a book and quite

happily went and sat down with [the dog].

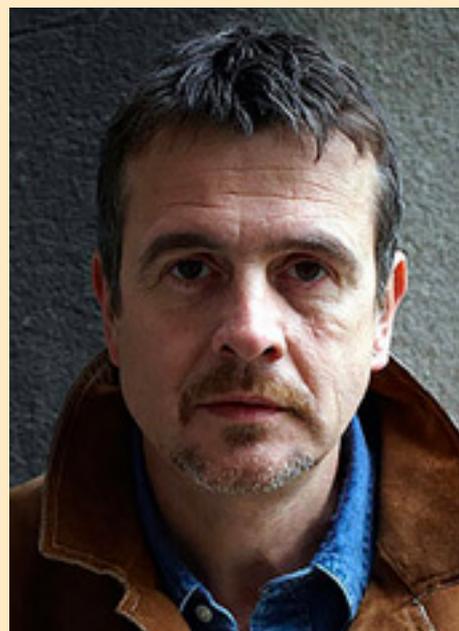
'A mother whose daughter has selective mutism said that she had never read to anyone other than close family at home. At first, she settled down next to the dog and started whispering to him as she read. The longer she stroked him the more relaxed she became and by the end of the book, she was reading aloud.'

'Having the therapy dogs in on a Saturday morning is a great way of encouraging families into the library, encouraging greater footfall, more book borrowing and proving the library is a safe non-judgmental space for everyone.'

Obviously, such schemes must be organised with great care. Information here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/read2dogs>



Mark's the man



Mark Billingham is the winner of this year's Dagger in the Library award from the Crime Writers' Association. This Dagger is awarded for a whole body of work, recognising the role that libraries play in developing the careers of writers. They have to be popular with library users, and have a record of supporting libraries and borrowers.

The judges are librarians. One of them, Ian Anstice of www.publiclibrariesnews.com, says: 'The decision is made on how much the author has done for public libraries, so we check to see how active they have been in visiting libraries, promotions etc. And of course how popular their books are in libraries.'

Mark told TLC: 'To win any award that is closely associated with libraries will always be an honour.'

'There is no writer – certainly no writer worth anything – who is not a reader first and foremost, but not all of them were lucky enough to grow up in a house full of books. I certainly wasn't.'

'Were it not for the weekly trips with my mum to our local library in King's Heath, Birmingham, I would never have become the passionate reader I was and remain. I would not now be a writer. It's as simple as that.'

'Librarians are superstars and heroes. If those young people currently growing up in houses with no books around are to one day become readers and perhaps writers, it is vital that libraries are supported and cherished.'

'Most importantly, we must all do everything we can to ensure that no more of them are closed.'

Cost of living crisis – libraries step in

Libraries are already on the frontline, directly supporting the growing numbers in critical need. But, says Libraries Connected, they can't do it without proper funding.

'Don't take us for granted,' is the call from Libraries Connected, the chief librarians' organisation. Its new survey* already shows growing demand for help from people hit by rocketing inflation. This has included information on personal finance and budgeting, help reducing household bills and practical support accessing food and clothing.

Of the 32 services (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) surveyed, 44% are already stretching their resources to cope. Over a third (38%) have introduced tailor-made new services.

This is a grim picture. And clearly things will get much worse with winter weather and further energy price hikes to come. Over 80% are planning for an influx of people coming in just to keep warm...

The survey also shows the breadth of support provided by libraries: food and clothes banks, cooking on a budget classes, help with household bills, coffee mornings and holiday activities for children are just some of the ways they are responding to the new economic reality.

Isobel Hunter, chief executive of Libraries Connected, says: 'Libraries are thriving community hubs with a presence in every high

We are seeing increasing numbers of people in need through our doors.



Libraries and the cost of living crisis

Briefing note
June 2022



Libraries
Connected

We are already seeing an increase in people spending long periods of time in libraries, some of whom tell us they are avoiding using energy at home.

street and town centre, so they are uniquely placed to support people in challenging times.

'As with the pandemic, libraries have been quick to identify and respond to the cost-of-living crisis – once again demonstrating their vital role in addressing big societal challenges.

Libraries have always been a safe haven. We are seeing increased homelessness and more people living at the margins.

'But libraries must not be taken for granted. This briefing presents a snapshot of where we are now, before the crisis has really hit.

'Library services are ready and willing to respond. But they must be adequately funded and supported to fulfil this vital community role.'

The survey shows how libraries are adapting to help people navigate the crisis. Some services are a natural part of the library's core offer. Others are being specially developed. They fall into five broad areas:

Information and advice

A traditional offer is books and resources on budgeting, personal finance and debt – plus fiction titles exploring these themes. Over a quarter of services (28%) have developed their stock on these topics.

The vast majority (88%) also signpost users to advice and advocacy organisations such as Citizens Advice or Age UK. Many libraries also host advice sessions run by charities or local council service points.

Digital support

Free use of computers and free wifi are more vital than ever. Most libraries also offer one-to-one support with using PCs. They are increasingly being asked for help using the internet to switch utility suppliers, find the best deals on household goods and apply for the £150 council tax rebate. Library PCs are also being used to claim and

We are being approached by partners to help them reach families and the vulnerable with specific support around warmer homes initiatives, mental health support and scam awareness, as there are reports people are being offered bogus help with their financial situation.



We have more people who are “just sitting” in the library – also increased numbers of homeless people using services.

manage Universal Credit, which can only be done online.

Skilling up

Libraries have reacted quickly to programme learning events to equip people with essential skills. Examples include informal drop-in sessions on reducing household bills, budget cooking workshops and intensive support for rough sleepers looking for employment. The vast majority of these sessions are free and open to all.

Food, clothing and hygiene banks

Over half of the services surveyed host food, clothing or hygiene banks – or act as donation and distribution points for them. Libraries are a natural choice for this role, says Libraries Connected, as they are convenient to access and have high local recognition. As they are used by a very wide range of people for many different purposes, they may be perceived as less stigmatising than other venues. Examples of clothing banks include school uniform swaps, winter coat rails and smart outfits to borrow for job interviews.

Clubs and cultural activities

Libraries have noticed an increase in people attending clubs and cultural activities – and then staying in the library for the rest of the day. Importantly, most libraries (59%) provide free drinks and sometimes food at these events. Many now also host Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) events, which support children in receipt of free school meals through holiday periods.

There are good reasons why libraries should take on these extra roles, says Libraries

Lots more use of the internet looking for money saving tips, whether they should change suppliers and where to access additional financial support.

Connected: ‘Librarians are among the most trusted professions. For many people libraries are the natural place to go for high quality, independent advice and information.

‘They know that books and information resources at their local library have been carefully selected by professionals.

‘Libraries work hard to create welcoming and accessible spaces, with friendly staff. For this reason, people in need often feel more comfortable approaching a library than a council building.

‘Users also know they can stay all day if they need to, use the toilet and charge their phone with no one asking intrusive or difficult questions.’

The report gives examples of four library services that are ramping up their offer to include various new cost of living initiatives: Barnet, Cheshire East, Hampshire and Norfolk.

* <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/libraries-connected-calls-increased-support-library-services-amid-cost-living-crisis>

Library staff have supported customers to use the public computers to access switching sites for utilities, online deals for energy efficient white goods and signposting to council services for help with housing and benefit enquiries. There has also been an increase in people seeking information about debt advice.

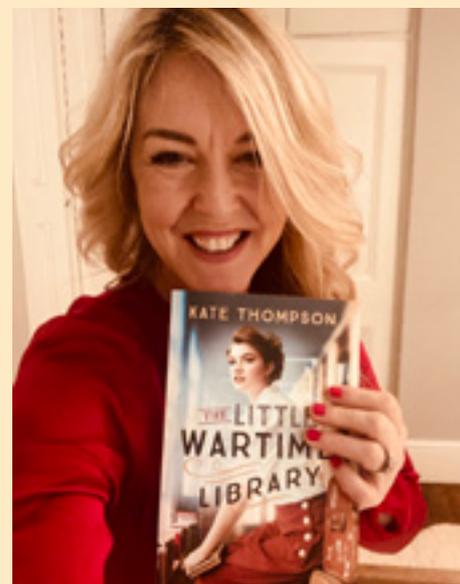
TLC says...

The question remains: can libraries go on and on expanding their remit with no extra funding? They worked wonders during the pandemic, providing masses of new online resources and extra personal support – on a shoe-string. Councils took notice.

This, so far, has served to save most services (not all) from severe cuts. But can it last?

This report provides strong evidence that, in a whole new crisis, libraries can again play a key role in supporting councils’ most vulnerable residents. But it is also a strong plea to stop taking their heroic efforts for granted.

Now councils themselves are falling victim to inflation and massive energy bills. We are not optimistic.



Make a date with Kate!

In issue no 102 (pp 23–26), we covered author Kate Thompson’s new book about the ‘little wartime library’ underground in Bethnal Green. The paperback is out in September – to coincide with a celebration of the 100th birthday of the library. It has a new chapter of interviews with librarians, demonstrating all the things they do to turn a room with books and computers into a proper library service. She is now sketching out her promotional tour. List (so far) below. Check locally for more details and booking. If you would like a visit from Kate to your library – online or in person – contact her on katharinethompson82@gmail.com.

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 6, Hullbridge Library, Essex, 2–4pm
- Collier Row, Havering libraries, a Thursday in September, to be confirmed
- Tuesday 13, Cambridge Library, online, 2–3pm
- Saturday 17 Waterstones signing, Walton on Thames, 11am–4pm
- Wednesday 21, Pen to Print, Dagenham Libraries, online, 1.2–3pm
- Saturday 24, Barnes Libraries, in person

OCTOBER

- Saturday 1, Felixstowe Libraries, Suffolk, in person
- Friday 7, Wakefield Libraries, Yorkshire, in person
- Thursday 13, launch event for the Little Wartime Library and celebration of the library’s centenary, Bethnal Green Library, in person, 5–8pm
- Saturday 15, CILIP retired librarians conference

NOVEMBER

- Saturday 5, Write Idea Festival, Whitechapel, 2.30–3.30pm.

Library-loving Laureates

Every two years, a new Children's Laureate is appointed. Managed by BookTrust – the UK's largest children's reading charity – and sponsored by Waterstones, the aim is to promote the importance of reading and children's literature. Each Laureate does it their own way.



PHOTO: DAVID BEBBER

Joseph Coelho

The latest Laureate (the 12th) is award-winning performance poet, playwright and children's author Joseph Coelho. His work includes the Luna Loves picture books, middle grade series *Fairy Tales Gone Bad*, YA verse novel *The Girl Who Became a Tree*, and poetry collections for all ages including *Overheard in a Tower Block* and *Poems Aloud*.

So what is this one planning to do? Three things...

He says: 'Poetry is powerful. It is the medium we turn to at weddings, funerals and new births because it goes beyond mere words. Poetry translates the soul.'

'I want to use the prestigious platform of the Waterstones Children's Laureate to highlight and celebrate the power of poetry. To invite the nation, young and old, to write poems, to become poets.'

'I want to ensure that every child has the opportunity to see themselves in books and as bookmakers through the plethora of new and exciting voices we have coming out of the UK – to diversify bookshelves so that every child can imagine themselves as writers, illustrators and poets.'



'And, finally I want to hug every library, these miraculous institutions where new horizons line the shelves, where minds go to grow.'

'Libraries made me a writer and make communities thrive – I wish to champion the services of these essential launchpads of learning.'

Diversity

He says he will focus on three major projects:

'Bookmaker Like You' will showcase new talent within the industry and spotlight their work, so that children are introduced to a range of creatives that truly reflect everyone in our diverse society, and ensure that every child can see themselves as a bookmaker.

'Poetry Prompts' will celebrate the power of poetry in all its forms, breaking down the fear often associated with reading and writing to

show why poems are for everyone, and the joy that writing, reading and performing poetry can bring.

Library Marathon

And he will champion local libraries, highlighting the vital role they play within the community and inspiring a love of reading in young people, by completing his 'Library Marathon' – to join a library in every local authority in the UK, and encourage even more people to register with their local library.

This project has already been running for some years. By the time the pandemic hit, he had already joined 140 libraries. He now has two years to join the remaining 70!

More information: <https://www.booktrust.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-laureate/about-the-laureate>

Cressida Cowell

The retiring Children's Laureate is Cressida Cowell, popular author of *How to Train Your Dragon* and the *Emily Brown* and *The Wizard of Once* series. She did a lot in a difficult time slot. You can still catch her reading from the *Dragon* books on youtube.

And she went out with a bang: a report on her 'Life-changing Libraries' pet project. Her starting point was the appalling fact that one in eight primary schools has no library space at all. Worse still, this lack is more than doubled in schools with more disadvantaged children.

It's worth noting, the report adds, that 'in... areas of economic disadvantage, children are also less likely to make use of a local public library, meaning that they are unlikely to be accessing any library facilities at all. There may be no library in the area, it may be too far away to travel to, or perhaps there is no family interest or engagement in reading.'



‘Between 2009 and 2020, local authority spending on libraries fell by 44% in real terms and 33% of sites closed.

‘Studies have shown that vulnerable children benefit from library facilities the most and that reading for pleasure is more important for a child’s academic success than their parents’ socio-economic status. This suggests that increasing children’s access to school libraries could yield huge value, particularly within disadvantaged communities.’

So what did Cressida do? Over a school year, BookTrust worked with her at six very different primary schools across England – all with at least 25% of pupils eligible for free school meals. The aim: to ‘develop a reading for pleasure culture’.

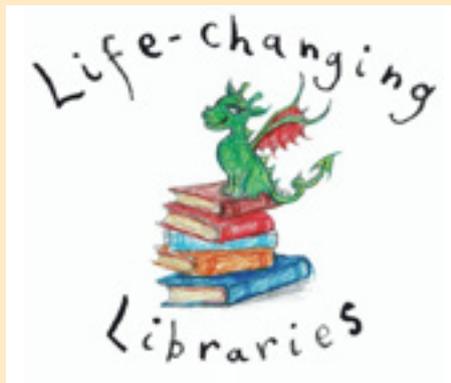
This focused on the four pillars of a successful library – space, books, expertise, and whole-school and parent involvement.

For instance, library spaces were provided, existing ones were spruced up and all schools were given a collection of 1,000 specially-chosen books.

Staff were given training and resources from agencies including the School Library Association for access to high-quality staff CPD and resources online. This included specific advice on reading for pleasure and on using good books for the English curriculum.

Communities

Post-Covid plans were developed to include communities via parent and pupil reading sessions, open library/ coffee morning sessions for the wider public, social sessions for older people, a parents’ lending library and linking with community groups such as toddler groups and local midwifery services.



In all six schools, and in less than a year, the results were startling. Pupils came to spend much more time reading for pleasure, both at school and at home. Teachers also reported increased attention, engagement, motivation to learn and feelings of self-worth.

Wellbeing improved in both children and staff!

Cressida added: ‘I find it compelling that the words “safe, calm and quiet” were frequently used by teachers and students when talking about their new library.’

‘The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on children’s mental health. These libraries have provided a special space for students to find “shelter”, to relax, to regulate

The report is a feel-good read that anyone can enjoy. It also has plenty of tips that any children’s library might consider trying:

<https://cdn.booktrust.org.uk/globalassets/resources/life-changing-libraries/life-changing-libraries-report---final.pdf>

The letter...

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2021/april/libraries-change-lives-read-cressida-cowells-open-letter-to-prime-minister-boris-johnson>

and to share their new-found love of books and reading.

‘Schools are not only trying to close the learning gap created by the pandemic, but are also being affected by rising costs. The chronic problem of inequality – left unsolved for too many years – is now a crisis. We must take action now.’

A school governor said: ‘This is the thread that pulls everything together for them... It’s such a quiet and warm, safe space. Homes aren’t always like that.’

Heart-breaking

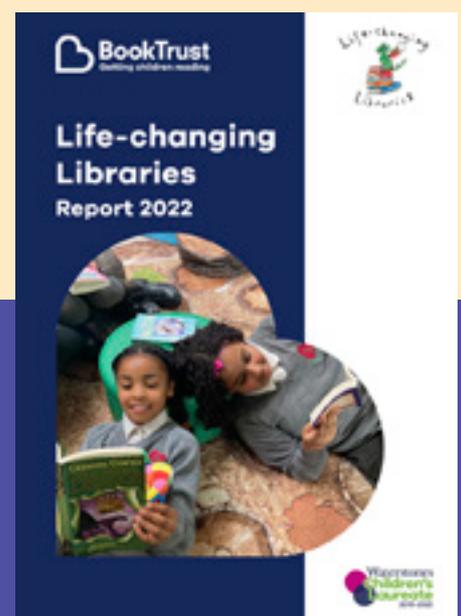
And a headteacher said: ‘For years we have been looking for interventions to boost attainment, to help close the gap between disadvantaged and SEN children and their peers. The library was the only intervention they needed.’

Cressida began the project with a hard-hitting open letter to Boris Johnson – signed by all the 10 Laureates who preceded her and 17 chiefs of just about every relevant organisation you could think of.

She asked for £100m year to get every primary school library up to scratch. ‘It is heart-breaking,’ she said, ‘to see just how unevenly this fundamental opportunity is distributed. So often the children who need books the most are in schools that cannot provide them with even an adequate school library, let alone a good one...’

‘The gap in educational attainment and opportunity remains stark, worrying and urgent.’

The money, of course, has not materialised.



All fine and dandy?

Are you for or against? Library fines are a hot topic, with a growing global movement to remove all fines for overdue books. Libraries Connected (the library chiefs group) reports from the battlefield...

Libraries have traditionally charged fines, to encourage people to return books and to raise money. But in recent years they have been questioning whether fines are counter-productive. Do they put off people from using the library? Do they have an unfair impact on those with low incomes – the very groups libraries most want to support?

However, removing fines isn't a simple matter. Libraries may be left with a budget gap, or fear that lenders may hang on to their books forever.

As a membership body we are always keen to respond to the ambitions of our members. So we decided to launch a survey to explore the topic in more detail – especially to find out how some libraries have been able to remove fines, and what the impacts have been.

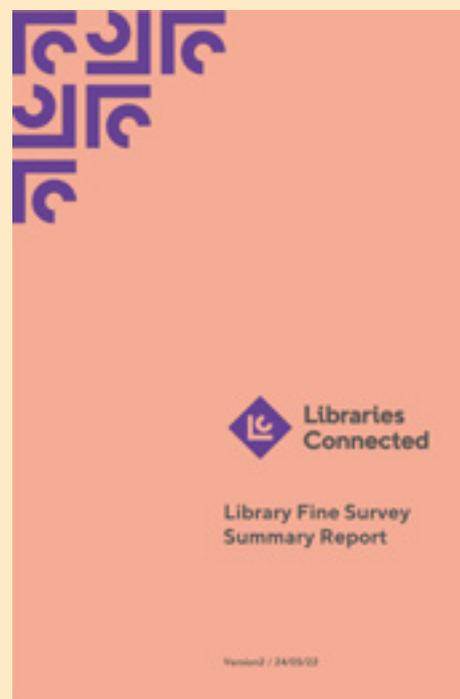
We hoped to uncover useful evidence to help more libraries explore whether they should go fines free and if so, how best to do so.

In March 2022 we surveyed our members. We had 61 responses (just over a third of the 176 library services in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown dependencies).

We also ran a workshop with our advisory committee, which is made up of heads of service and senior managers who lead our Universal Library Offers and chair our regional networks. We asked them what the pros and cons are.

We found that:

- Most library services are still charging people for returning items after the due date. Only 16 told us they had removed fines. Eight of these had done so in the past two years.
- Around 33% told us they were considering removing fines. Another 40% said they may consider it.
- 18% of library services that had removed fines had seen an increase in membership. 13% had seen an increase in overall loans. However, most had seen no change or were unsure. Service restrictions brought about by Covid-19 have made it very difficult to measure the impact.
- 40% of libraries that had removed fines had seen an increase in adults using the library; 30% had seen an increase in families and people from disadvantaged areas; 20% had seen an increase in five-to-16-year-olds.



The main barriers they identified were:

- Loss of income, which couldn't be easily offset by savings or new funding streams.
- Customers not returning or not renewing books, causing stock circulation problems and a reduction in issues for new books.
- Difficulty in justifying removing fines when the council had a funding gap and services were being reduced.
- A lack of evidence showing the benefits made it hard to argue the case.
- The impact on community managed libraries, who rely on the income they get from overdue charges.

The perceived benefits to removing library fines were:

- Removal of the stigma of overdue books.
- Helping to tackle the poverty agenda.
- Increasing library use (particularly by people from deprived areas and those with lower incomes).
- Recovering the physical library 'offer' post-pandemic.



The full report, with more details, is here:

<https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/library-fine-survey-results-and-summary-report-revealed>

Some quick results from researching UK library fines:

- 24% are now completely fine free.
- The highest fine is 60p per day for both adults and children.
- The lowest fine (aside from £0) is a child fine of 1p per day (seems fairly pointless).

from *Libraries Hacked* (@librarieshacked)

- Encouraging lapsed users to return to the library.
- Reducing conflict – not charging certain groups (e.g. young people, people with disabilities) creates conflicts that frontline staff have to manage.
- Reducing costs, with the possibility of switching to a cashless system.
- Bringing the physical offer in line with the digital. There are no fines on e-content – so people without digital access or skills are fined, while those with access and skills aren't.
- Providing a much-needed good news story.

PRO

Library leaders who were considering removing library fines told us:

‘It is preventing low-income families from using our service. We want to encourage use of our service and remove this as a potential barrier.’

‘Library fines unfairly target the most economically deprived parts of our community. Currently we have successfully had funding from the council’s Covid economic recovery budget to delay (until March 2023) re-instating the suspension of fines that took place in Wales as part of Covid measures. Now the argument locally is who will cover in future the income shortfall from not charging fines. It is not that we should not charge them.’

CON

A library leader who isn’t considering removing library fines told us:

‘We cannot afford to lose this income. We are considering reviewing our membership categories to ensure they provide ease of use and support in the right areas in the community.’

A library leader who may consider removing library fines told us:

‘If I lost this income, I would be expected to find it in other ways – for example by ticketing events. I would rather maintain free events so all can benefit.’

Libraries Week 2022

Here it is again! Libraries Week is the annual ‘showcase and celebration of the best that libraries have to offer’, run by librarians’ organisation CILIP.

This year’s dates are October 3-9. This year’s theme is life-long learning, helping individuals to unlock their potential at every stage of life.

LW is taken up with varying degrees of enthusiasm by local library services. Some don’t do it. Others do plenty – and Friends can take advantage to add in their own messages. This year, it’s a great vehicle to advertise reading groups, craft clubs, gardening, knitting circles and so on.

There’s also a national campaign on social media and, with luck, in the press.

As always, there are attractive posters, social graphics and logos, all in English and Welsh, which you can use as they are, or adapt to add in your own message. Download at <http://librariesweek.org.uk/libraries-hub>.

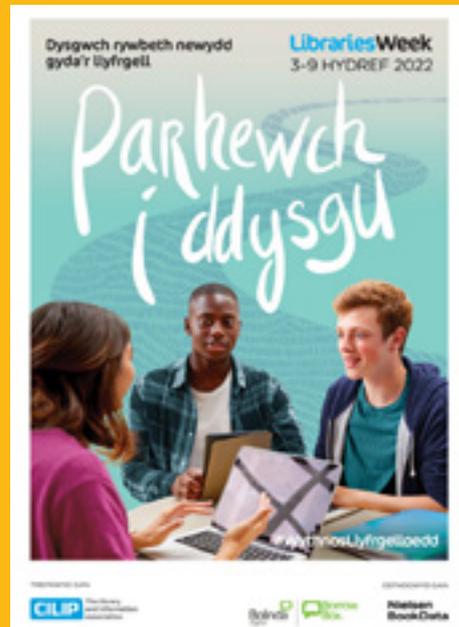
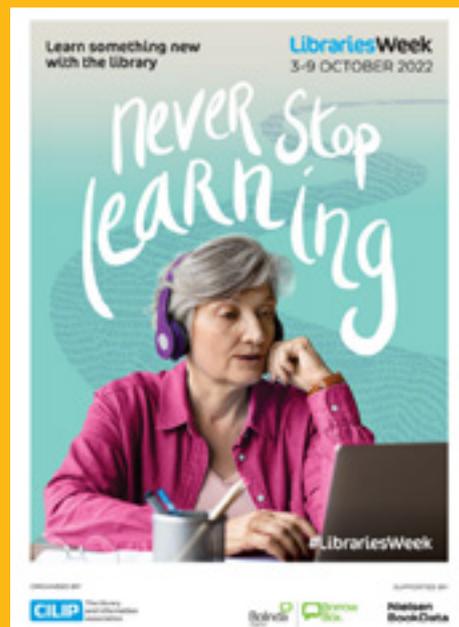
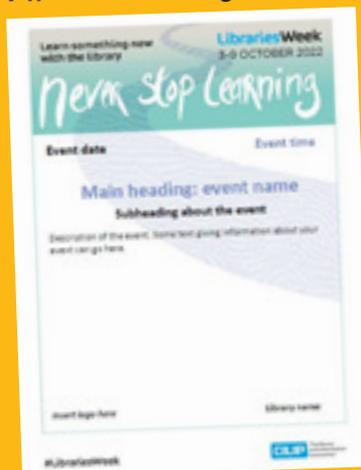
And a VERY useful suite of marketing ideas and resources you can use any time - well worth looking at:

<http://librariesweek.org.uk/libraries-hub/get-ready-for-libraries-week/market-your-event>.

Plus a ‘get started’ guide to planning events, including template press releases.

Follow on Twitter or Instagram: @librariesweek. Share your plans at #LibrariesWeek.

You can register to get all the latest updates on this year’s campaign at <http://librariesweek.org.uk>.



Green scheme

Public libraries are all about sustainability. Recycling books, and sharing useful information, is what they already do. Now a new programme aims to get them working together on some real climate action.

ACE (Arts Council England) has awarded £163,000 to librarians' organisation CILIP to launch the Green Libraries Partnership.

This aims to:

- discover and harness existing work in libraries on sustainability
- build environmental understanding and action within libraries
- enable libraries to work with their communities on this
- position libraries at the heart of local environment programmes.

The funding is hardly world-changing. But CILIP will work with the British Library, Libraries Connected and environment charity Julie's Bicycle on a five-year scheme.

The aim: 'a UK-wide, cross-sector programme focused on the contribution of librarians, information and knowledge professionals... to encourage libraries to actively reduce their carbon footprint and increase awareness of environmental issues for the wider public by providing accessible resources'.

A start has been made. A manifesto has been agreed. A survey has gone out to find out what libraries are already doing. And a modest £40,000 is being shared by 15 local projects, piloting a variety of approaches. There is clearly scope for 'the community' – including Friends groups – to get in on the ground floor...



Green
Libraries
Manifesto

- 1 **Bring environmental sustainability to the heart of decision-making**
- 2 **Innovate and evolve**
- 3 **Work with our communities**
- 4 **Use our voice for more impact**
- 5 **Work in partnership**
- 6 **Grow and share our knowledge**
- 7 **Support young people**

THE FIRST 15 PROJECTS

Inspire Midlands – LOGGS (Library Outdoor Green Garden Spaces)

A library garden with outdoor classroom facilities to develop 'high impact' activities in Bircotes rural library. This will act as a pilot, generating data on community awareness and engagement, to explore creating a rolling programme in other rural libraries.

Staffordshire – Changing Climates Changing Lifestyles toolkit

A toolkit of resources for 'Climate Change Library Champions' in all 43 libraries, developed with local artist Juneau Projects. The project will support behaviour change by creating a craft kit on recycling and deliver two recycling workshops for families.

Bi-borough (Westminster-Kensington & Chelsea) – Cleaner greener libraries and archives

Interactive training with Groundworks London for staff to acquire a greater understanding of ESG (environmental, social and corporate governance) principles and practice. This will culminate in an interactive workshop with residents, to identify greening projects.

Barnsley – Bees in Barnsley

A month-long festival celebrating all things bees, highlighting how essential they are to our ecosystem. Activities and events will raise awareness of the challenges caused by declining bee numbers, and what we can do as individuals.

Kirklees – Discovering the Secret Garden

Developing the unused garden behind Golcar library into an accessible, sustainable community area, with help from three local schools and a local artist. The theme of the artwork will be sustainable gardens for native wildlife, plantings and habitats.

Hampshire – Sparking conversations with children and families

Activities for children, young people and families at 40 libraries, focusing on environmental sustainability, including worksheets for young children and education sessions with Southampton Scrapstore, a local recycling charity.

Greenwich – Wishing Well: Eltham Library's community garden

An intergenerational project to design and construct a library community garden, using sustainable materials and skills sharing between local primary schools and Age UK's Men/Women in Sheds group.

Blackburn with Darwen – Activities at the Children's Literature Festival 2022

Authors, poets and illustrators will draw on their published 'green work' to create an underlying theme of the importance of looking after our

environment, e.g. the rap poem, Save Us From Plastic, and Felicity Fly in the Garden, which educates children about pollinators and their importance in the eco-cycle.

Lancashire – Planet Savers

Workshops for children and families during the national Fun Palace weekend in five libraries, all based around environmental sustainability – one of the core principles of Planet Savers, Lancashire Libraries' in-house summer reading scheme.

Dudley – Enzo & Loc

Environmental action figures looking for ways to achieve net zero. Each month they will provide simple ideas that children can follow, reducing the amount of waste they make, reusing items or recycling them by using waste materials to make new products. The libraries will hold green sessions, highlighting books about biodiversity and sustainability, and offering activities such as creative crafts using recycled materials.

Wiltshire – Interpretation boards in libraries

These will show what has already been done by Wiltshire council to reduce energy wastage, generate and use renewable energy and increase recycling in libraries. They will include examples of 'sustainable swaps' from Sustainable Dezives, information on future council plans (e.g. solar panels, air heat pumps and LED lighting) and details of our collection of climate books.

Wakefield – Encouraging sustainable transport to libraries

Analysing and upgrading information to promote non-car travel options, plus cycle repair equipment at our branches.

Surrey – Learning to deliver zero carbon

Training for 200+ library staff to increase their awareness of the benefits of going net zero, and how they can support the Surrey County Council Net Zero Programme.

Lambeth – Save the planet, pounds and pennies

Activities with local community groups addressing the cost of living crisis, showing how a greener lifestyle can also save money. These will run across all 10 libraries and then be embedded in the core delivery, making libraries a central place to find out about a green lifestyle.

Newcastle – Greening Princess Square

Redevelop an abandoned urban planting area outside Newcastle City Library, to demonstrate how to increase biodiversity in the city centre and raise awareness of eco-friendly urban gardening techniques.

Ukraine — libraries on the frontline

In March, Ukraine was due to host an international library conference. Instead, its courageous librarians were starting to organise bomb shelters, camouflage classes and bibliotherapy. Meanwhile Kate Thompson was interviewing librarians for her book tour this autumn (see page 9). This is her report from the early days of an increasingly brutal war that is testing our values – and the depth of our commitment to them...

All that's left of the calm, organised interior is a pile of smoking timber, the powdery black remains of thousands of destroyed books and a blanket of shattered glass. On 11 March, Russian air strikes destroyed the Chernihiv Regional Library for Youth. Many more have suffered severe damage or complete destruction since the war began.

Libraries, like schools, museums and hospitals, are not military targets. Yet they are being ruthlessly targeted by Russian troops. Where librarians once worked in an atmosphere of tranquillity, now they find themselves hurled onto the front line.

Ukraine's defiant librarians have come out fighting. Now, as well as issuing books, they are writing what could end up being one of the greatest resistance stories of this war.

'We have set up bomb shelters in many of our country's libraries and are providing shelter to many families,' says Oksana Brui, president of the Ukrainian Library Association and Library Director of Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic

Institute, her tone full of defiance. 'Our libraries are buzzing like hives, full of librarians, readers, refugees and volunteers.'

Far from being passive victims, the country's libraries are part of the fight for victory. Just as British libraries encouraged their patrons to Read for Victory during WW2 and embedded themselves as information bureaus within their communities, so too are Ukrainian libraries playing vital roles within this conflict.

Hour by hour

Typing to the background sound of shelling and sirens, she continues: 'We are reacting hour by hour to what is needed, from giving families shelter during Russian bombing raids, to making camouflage nets and medical gowns for the military, to countering disinformation.'

'We are holding home care courses and acting as refugee reception points, as well as transferring books to neighbouring countries that received Ukrainian refugees.'

'We have guides from local authorities, tips from psychologists for coping each day,



motivational quotes from literature – and access to the internet. We also serve as hubs to collect goods and humanitarian aid for defence units and hospitals, and we are sewing medical gowns and knitting camouflage nets.'

Fake news

Oksana is proud of the way the library service is reacting to the crisis. 'Many of our libraries have turned their underground book storage spaces into bomb shelters for local communities – they are cosy, with lots of interesting books around! Tea and support is also offered. This is already considered a new library service.'

She acknowledges the importance and power of trustworthy information.

'Ukrainian libraries are really strategic objects for dictatorial Putin's Russia. After all, our libraries are the centres of intellectual freedom and civil activity, guides of national ideas, patriotism and European values, spaces of enlightenment and tolerance, multilingual and multicultural.'

'And Ukrainian librarians are warriors against fake news and hostile information. Libraries





stand for truth and information. We are the strategic weapon in the fight against disinformation.’

Just as public library loans soared during the Blitz in 1940, with beleaguered civilians seeking solace and sanctuary by reading in underground shelters, so too are Ukrainians whiling away the long, dark nights in library bomb shelters by escaping into the pages of a book.

‘Whatever books help to distract and calm down we will bring,’ Khmelnytsky Central City Library wrote on their Facebook page. ‘Along with books, librarians offer their readers virtual exhibitions, online quizzes, psychological conversations with fear-based children, puzzle games and virtual fairy tales for activities with their child in bomb shelters, library-therapy activities.’ Oksana describes their work as ‘bibliotherapy’.

European values

She isn’t yet sure how many libraries have been destroyed by enemy fire. ‘Now we have very little information. We know for definite about ten cases, but we know there are many more. Librarians are under Russian fire, often without light, heat, water or any communication. The number increases every day.

‘In the 21st century in the centre of Europe, Russia is committing genocide against Ukrainians. It’s really scary when schools, libraries, universities, hospitals, maternity hospitals, residential neighbourhoods are bombed. Russian soldiers shoot at cars with a red cross, unarmed people.

‘There is a humanitarian catastrophe in many Ukrainian cities, towns and villages. People are sitting in basements without heat, light, food and water. The Russian occupiers are not giving green corridors to withdraw the civilians. Hundreds of people die, and children too.

‘Today Ukraine is fighting not only for its own independence and the future of its children. We are fighting for the future of the whole world,’ insists Oksana. ‘Ukrainians are dying for European values. Supporting Ukraine, you are supporting the democratic future of all the countries. The whole world must unite to stop Putin!’

The global library community has come out in support after Oksana issued a note postponing – not cancelling – the forthcoming library conference it was scheduled to host. Nicholas

Poole, the CEO of CILIP, the library and information association, says: ‘Their message basically said, “We will reschedule just as soon as we have finished vanquishing our invaders.”

‘I salute them.’



Books for Ukraine’s children

For news on how the library world is rallying round Ukraine – and some useful tips on how to spot false information – see CILIP’s Ukraine Crisis Hub at <https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/ukraine>

To give some direct book-related help, CILIP recommends a crowdfunder launched by the Ukrainian Book Institute, supported by the Federation of European Publishers.

This is aimed at the many Ukrainian children who are now refugees all over Europe. They need ‘to be entertained while keeping the link with their homeland’.

Children’s books in Ukrainian are being printed in Europe because the city of Kharkiv, where the main Ukrainian printing works are located, has been heavily bombed.

So far 35,000 books have been distributed in Poland, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Hungary. Ukrainian publishers are also providing templates so that books can be printed off in host countries.

More information (in English):

<https://ubi.org.ua/uk/activity/mizhnarodna-diyalnist/blagodiyna-pidtrimka-knigovidannya>

To donate: <https://gogetfunding.com/crowdfunding-campaign-to-support-printing-of-ukrainian-childrens-books/>



Here is the rest of the Libraries Connected calendar that we began in issue no 102. Details of all the events listed, and what the most useful ones can provide for you...

JUNE 1-7

NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WEEK

<https://volunteersweek.org>

Volunteers' Week is 'a time to say thanks for the contribution millions of people make across the UK through volunteering'. It is managed by NCVO (National Council for Voluntary Organisations). The dates are the same every year.

The website has ideas for events, activities and awareness raising. A resource pack (in English or Welsh) helps to add polish to your efforts, with social media banners, sample



copy, graphics, a template press release, a certificate to present and suggestions for each day.

6-12 JUNE

CARERS WEEK

<https://www.carersweek.org>

An annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, the challenges unpaid carers face and the contribution they make. It also 'helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support'.



It is run by Carers UK with six other charities: Age UK, Carers Trust, Motor Neurone Disease Association, Oxfam GB, Rethink Mental Illness and The Lewy Body Society.

Each year has a different theme, and a related campaign. In 2022 it was 'Making caring visible, valued and supported' and asking MPs to support better respite services for carers.

Free resources to download – in English or Welsh – include logos, posters, social media graphics and information leaflets for carers.

Plus a booklet with lots of ideas for local events (including online), from wellbeing sessions to awards for support organisations (useful for other local groups too!).

6-19 JUNE

HI VIS FORTNIGHT

<https://readingsight.org.uk>

Reading Sight is a one-stop information shop owned by Share the Vision – a coalition of UK organisations working to improve library services for VIPs (visually impaired) and print disabled people. Partners include the British Library, Calibre Audio Library, ClearVision, Libraries Connected and RNIB.



HiVis Fortnight was formerly known as Make a Noise in Libraries. Libraries are asked to promote accessible reading services and activities (their own and other organisations') and organise events.

The website has plenty of advice on making libraries more VIP-friendly, accessible formats and relating to VIPs. Resources to download include logos, poster templates and social media labels.

9 JUNE

EMPATHY DAY

<https://www.empathylab.uk/empathy-day>

Started in 2017 by EmpathyLab, an organisation that aims to use books and stories to 'raise an empathy-educated generation' of children. It says: 'Empathy is learnable, and reading is a powerful empathy-building tool.'

The Day is a free festival featuring popular writers and illustrators, which can be streamed to classrooms, libraries etc.

It also has a wealth of reading lists, ideas and resources (in English and Welsh), to use with your own events or at home 'to get everyone having fun and boosting their empathy skills'. There are toolkits specifically aimed at libraries, schools and families, plus publicity material.

The core is the Empathy Superpower Challenge, nine activities that teach 'empathy skills' in a fun way, from early years to secondary school level. Unusually, all these are available well in advance (usually January).

FAMILY ACTIVITIES PACK

Brilliant empathy-boosting things to do at home!



Empathy Day 2022



They remain on the website to use at any time. The website also has short stories, and videos of stories being read aloud. Well worth checking out.

13-17 JUNE

LONELINESS AWARENESS WEEK

<https://www.marmaladetrust.org>



Few people care to be labelled 'lonely'. And libraries, of course, are uniquely placed to offer tactful human contact at any level, from just sitting around where there are other people, to joining a friendly group.

This Week was begun in 2017 by Marmalade Trust, a charity that works to 'reduce the stigma of loneliness and encourage people to talk more openly about it'.

Its website has a mass of useful resources to use as you wish. From basic info to answering private questions such as 'Does being lonely mean there is something wrong with me?', to how to talk about loneliness, to a huge range of practical advice for people seeking a change –

including links with organisations that bring people together. (It doesn't mention libraries!) Its school lesson plans could be used to spark discussion in any group.

The LAW section has targeted advice about specific situations such as disability, being self-employed, feeling isolated at uni or work – and much more.



22 JUNE WINDRUSH DAY

www.windrushfoundation.com
<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk>



This was launched by the government in 2018 'in the wake of the Windrush scandal'. The June date marks the anniversary of the SS Empire Windrush's arrival at Tilbury Docks in 1948 – carrying the first Caribbean migrants invited here to help re-build Britain after the war.

Local activities have included community celebrations, music, poetry, prose, comedy, history and more thought-provoking events such as Windrush awareness workshops and Black ancestry classes.

The two websites include historical background, many personal stories and information on prominent figures in the Caribbean community.

The focus is increasingly on action to right the wrongs done to many members of the Windrush generation or their children. Also on busting various myths...



4-10 JULY HEALTH INFORMATION WEEK

<https://healthinfoweek.wixsite.com/healthinfoweek>



Health Information Week

Inspiring Better Health

Health Information Week is a national, multi-sector campaign promoting high-quality information for patients and the public. It is run by Health Education England, the NHS in England, Wales and Scotland, Patient Information Forum, Libraries Connected and The Reading Agency.

The website is very useful indeed. It includes various logos, graphics, templates and social media banners. Better – and something you can use any time – it has loads of info, book lists, ideas and links to many resources and all sorts of organisations.

There's an excellent file of ideas for events, contacts and publicity – from simple book displays to online get-togethers. Plus downloadable info sheets on the themes for 2022: patient information in translation, long Covid, general health, kidney health, media literacy, heart health and arthritis. Plus evaluations of previous projects, many run by libraries.

Well worth a browse, whatever your interests.



20-26 JUNE REFUGEE WEEK

<https://refugeeweek.org.uk>



Refugee Week is a UK-wide 'umbrella festival' that anyone can get involved in. Its purpose is to 'celebrate the contributions, creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary'.

Founded in 1998 and held every year around World Refugee Day on 20 June, it is coordinated by Counterpoints Arts, a national organisation in the field of arts, migration and cultural change. Its huge list of sponsors includes Amnesty, Freedom from Torture, Oxfam, the UN Refugee Agency and numerous refugee support agencies.

The idea is to support and show off art and other productions by or about refugees. Possible activities include arts festivals, exhibitions, film screenings, museum tours, football tournaments, public talks and activities for children.

9 JULY – SEPTEMBER SUMMER READING CHALLENGE

<https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk>

This summer holiday scheme, run since 1999 by The Reading Agency and funded by Arts Council England, encourages children aged four to 11 to set themselves a reading challenge. This helps prevent the summer reading skills 'dip'. It's also fun.

For 2022, the partner is the Science Museum Group for Gadgeteers, with a science and innovation theme to 'spark children's curiosity about the world around them'.

The website has book suggestions, games, activity sheets, author and illustrator interviews, a chat function and six characters to follow. Plus a home zone for parents.

Libraries run their own activities and give out goodies packs and books (fiction, fact books, poetry, joke books, picture books, graphic novels, audio books and eBooks, plus accessible formats for blind or partially sighted children, and those with a print disability).

Children receive special rewards each time they finish a book and there's a certificate for everyone who completes the Challenge.



12 AUGUST INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/iyd2022.html>

<https://www.unesco.org/en/days/youth-day?hub=701>



This is backed by the United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs. The objective this year is Intergenerational solidarity: creating a world for all ages, 'to amplify the message that action is needed across all generations to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and leave no one behind'.

The Day also aims to 'raise awareness on certain barriers to intergenerational solidarity, notably ageism, which impacts young and old persons, while having detrimental effects on society as a whole'.

There's a downloadable 'concept note' and 'issue note' on the background. The only UN-organised activity is a global webinar.

There is more information about world youth issues on the UNESCO website.



8 SEPTEMBER INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

<https://www.unesco.org/en/days/literacy-day>

<https://en.unesco.org/youth/toptips>

Launched in 1967 by UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation), this aims to 'remind the public of the importance of literacy as a matter of dignity and human rights, and to advance the literacy agenda towards a more literate and sustainable society'.

The website has information about world literacy. Also (under top tips) a useful step-by-step guide to organising a project.

13 SEPTEMBER ROALD DAHL DAY

<https://www.roalddahl.com/roald-dahl-story-day>

<https://www.roalddahl.com/world-book-day>



13 September is Dahl's birthday. As it's often a weekday, and as much of the website content is geared to teachers, this tends to be a schools event.

But there is plenty of material for your own celebration of this popular children's author (and his illustrator Quentin Blake). There is information about the man, the books and the characters, backed up by quizzes, games and exercises in creative writing.

You can take ideas from the lesson plans and activity sheets (look under CREATE & LEARN). There are downloadable packs for different age groups.

Find more of the same in the material created for World Book Day.



18–24 SEPTEMBER BANNED BOOKS WEEK

<https://bannedbooksweek.org>
<https://bannedbooksweek.org/promotional-tools>

The American Library Association launched this in 1982 after a surge in complaints to schools about their reading lists, and challenges to libraries by politicians, parent bodies and churches. It's currently worse than ever – and now some people are bringing a 'war on woke' to the UK. The ALA's campaign now has a long list of supportive organisations.

Promotional tools for 2022 are promised soon, including posters, info downloads, templates, shelf markers and social media banners.

There's also a handbook with programming ideas, best practices for events, resources and 'tips for handling censorship'. Read-ins of banned books are popular.

A much-needed UK version is developing, with supporters including the British Library, English PEN, The Publishers Association, the Royal Society of Literature and Libraries Connected. Plans for 2022 are unavailable...

Meanwhile it's a great theme for your own event, or a banned book display (you'll find that many are respected classics, from Huckleberry Finn to 1984).

You'll be amazed to see what is on these lists:

<https://medium.com/feedium/banned-books-list-2649e56db929>

<https://parade.com/1253145/parade/most-banned-books>

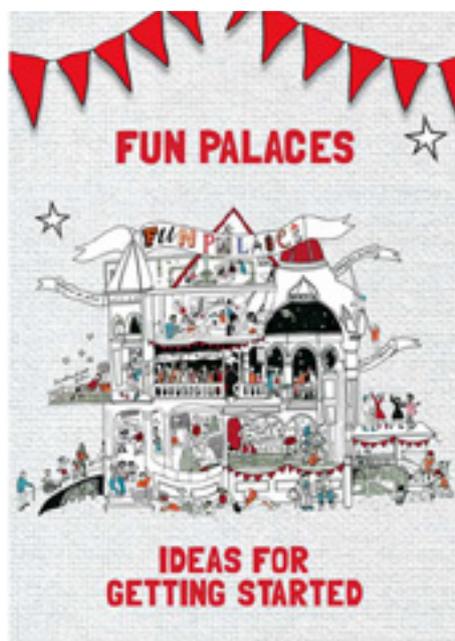
<https://www.penguin.co.uk/articles/2022/05/surprising-books-that-have-been-recently-banned-2019>

<https://schoolreadinglist.co.uk/books-for-topics/banned-books-week>

30 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER FUN PALACES

<https://funpalaces.co.uk>
<https://funpalaces.co.uk/makers-toolkit/resources/libraries>

This simple idea originated with theatre director Joan Littlewood in 1961. A 're-imagined' revival began in 2013 – 'local people sharing skills, creating tiny revolutions of connection'.



It is a year-round campaign 'towards a world where everyone has a say in what counts as culture, where it happens, who makes it, and who experiences it' – with a celebration always in the first weekend in October. And libraries are a natural venue.

The principle is: 'Don't "deliver" an event for people hoping they will come, instead hand your space over and let them decide what happens... It's about having a passion or enthusiasm for something (experts welcome too!)'. Little or no money is needed.

For instance, Oldham Libraries put up posters asking two questions, with space to add answers: 'What would you like to do or learn?' and 'What can you offer to share or teach?' The answers added up to a lively event featuring a variety of activities.

If you start with whatever (and whoever) you've got, and simply have a go, with an open attitude, the result may surprise you.

The website has a host of ideas, design resources, accounts of previous events and advice on everything from safety to publicity.

There is a whole section on libraries.

1–31 OCTOBER BLACK HISTORY MONTH

<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk>
Magazine:
<https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/black-history-month-2022>

This was first celebrated in the UK in 1987. The BHM website is a treasure-chest of information about Black achievers in all fields, plus history – and not just about slavery, but about pre-colonial

societies. Also comprehensive nationwide events listings.

The BHM magazine is central to the month. Interestingly, this year's theme is 'Time for Change: Action Not Words'. It says: 'To get to a better tomorrow, we can't just focus on the past... to improve the future, we need action, not words.' Accordingly, its 2022 issue will focus on the contribution of today's workers and campaigners: 'We're all making Black history, every day.' There is also a secondary schools resource pack.



3–9 OCTOBER LIBRARIES WEEK

<http://librariesweek.org.uk>

This 'annual showcase and celebration of the best that libraries have to offer' is run by librarians' association CILIP. Each year has a different theme – for 2022 it's 'Never stop learning'.

It's a chance for libraries to highlight what they already do. And for back-up there's a national publicity campaign and social media blitz during the week.

Resources from the website include social media graphics and logos, and a choice of posters in English and Welsh – some of which you can edit with your own material. Also editable templates to help you write press releases, invite local celebs or decision-makers, etc.

There are advice sheets on planning, publicity and media – and a whole file of advice on marketing, with case histories of successful campaigns. All these are useful at any time.

SAVE THE DATE
Libraries Week 2022
3-9 October

Libraries for life-long learning



6 OCTOBER

NATIONAL POETRY DAY

<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk>

<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/celebrate-national-poetry-day>

National Poetry Day was launched by the Poetry Society in 1994, but now has its own dedicated organiser body.



It is an annual celebration, on the first Thursday of October, to encourage everyone to make, experience and share poetry. There is a different theme each year. For 2022 it is The Environment.

The website has a list of simple suggestions to celebrate the day, starting with reading out a poem – it already has a good choice of relevant ones. Nearer the day, there will be suggestions for events and displays, posters and educational material to download.

10 OCTOBER

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-mental-health-day/2022>

**Doing What Matters
in Times of Stress:
An Illustrated Guide**



This is backed by the World Health Organisation 'to raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilise efforts in support of mental health'. This year's theme is Making Mental Health & Well-Being for All a Global Priority.

WHO says: 'Whilst the pandemic has, and continues to, take its toll on our mental health, the ability to reconnect through World Mental Health Day 2022 will provide us with an opportunity to re-kindle our efforts to protect and improve mental health.'

The website has much information about WHO projects, and mental health. Scroll down to 'More about mental health' to find some useful advice and resources covering a range of problems. For instance, there is a downloadable manual on Managing Stress in 24 languages, plus audio exercises in 12 languages.

For children worried about Covid-19 there is a picture book, 'My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19!' in 137 languages.

15-30 OCTOBER

FAMILY LEARNING FESTIVAL

<https://www.familylearningfestival.com>



This is co-ordinated by the Campaign for Learning, a division of education charity NCFE. The 2022 theme is 'inspiring curiosity'.

The idea is to lay on learning activities that are 'fun, informal, inclusive and intergenerational – and all family members are welcome including mum, dad, carers, siblings, uncles, aunts, grandparents and friends'.

There is a downloadable planning guide and an assets pack that includes logos, social media card templates, website banners and a choice of poster templates with different messages.

Super-useful at any time are two online files of activity suggestions.

They have links to bright ideas, with resources to run them, from organisations such as the British Library or the Woodland Trust. Find them under GET INVOLVED and FAMILIES.

17-23 OCTOBER

GET ONLINE WEEK

<https://uk.getonlineweek.com>

<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org>



Held every October since 2007, this is run by the digital inclusion charity Good Things Foundation. Like Libraries Week, it's an obvious way to jazz up and 'brand' something libraries do all the time.

The 2022 versions are not yet available, but going by 2021, the website will have inspiring personal stories – plus logos, planning guides for events both live and online (with Zoom backgrounds!), suggestions for topical messages, and images and an animated video to use on social media.

There are many resources you can customise with your own message (or just the library's address): a letter inviting local VIPs; a template press release; filters to customise social media (plus instructions) and template flyers and posters in English and Welsh highlighting attractions such as family connectedness, safety tips, health information or help with shopping.

The Good Things Foundation website also has plenty of background info on digital exclusion and what the charity does.

18 OCTOBER

ANTI SLAVERY DAY

<https://www.slavefreealliance.org/anti-slavery-day-2022>

<https://www.humantraffickingfoundation.org>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery>

<https://www.antislavery.org>

<https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org>

This Day was created in 2010 by a Private Members Bill, to create a platform to raise



awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery, and encourage organisations and individuals to address the problem.

Bodies involved include Slave-Free Alliance (which helps organisations check their supply chains etc) and The Human Trafficking Foundation, which hosts annual awards – and has much information on its website, mostly at the policy level but including UK case histories.

Slightly more practical information – case histories, how to spot a victim, what to do – is grouped on a government website. It includes an overall booklet, and leaflets for victims in various languages.

Best of all are the resources from Anti-Slavery International. These include information on all the forms of modern slavery (UK included); news of projects and campaigns; a fundraising action pack; a quick ‘Can you spot signs of slavery?’ test; advice for organisations; and a free education module for 11-to-14s ‘or anyone that wants to learn more’.

And if needed, there’s a free 24-hour online/ phone helpline in 200 languages run by the charity Unseen.

1–30 NOVEMBER INTERNATIONAL GAMES MONTH

[https://games.ala.org/
international-games-month](https://games.ala.org/international-games-month)



Games in libraries have become so popular that the former International Games Week has become a Month. Spearheaded by the American Library Association, it is run by volunteers (and librarians) worldwide ‘to reconnect communities through their libraries around the educational, recreational and social value of all types of games’.

Events can be as simple as a family day playing traditional board games such as Ludo and Scrabble. Enthusiasts will find online resources, ideas and promotional material nearer the date.

1–30 NOVEMBER MOVEMBER

[https://prostatecanceruk.org/
about-us/movember](https://prostatecanceruk.org/about-us/movember)
<https://be.movember.com>



This was established in 2003 ‘by a few friends over a beer in a pub just outside Melbourne, Australia’. It is now a worldwide men’s health awareness month and fund-raiser.

Carefully retaining a bloke-ish, jokey image, it is described as the month ‘when brave and selfless men around the world grow a moustache, and women step up to support them, all to raise awareness and funds for men’s health – specifically prostate cancer, testicular cancer, mental health and suicide prevention’.

Prostate Cancer UK is a main beneficiary of the funds raised. Its website has an enormous array of information and advice – online, downloadable or in print.

Brave men who sign in at the home website will get other suggestions for fund-raising, and personal stories and advice on a wider range of men’s problems.

3 DECEMBER INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

[https://www.un.org/en/observances/
day-of-persons-with-disabilities](https://www.un.org/en/observances/day-of-persons-with-disabilities)

United Nations says: ‘Disability inclusion is an essential condition to upholding human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security. It is also central to the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to leave no one behind. The commitment to realising the rights of persons with disabilities is not only a matter of justice; it is an investment in a common future.’

There are various relevant UN declarations and policies, though – interestingly – none before 1971. There is some information on the website.

10 DECEMBER HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

[https://www.un.org/en/observances/
human-rights-day](https://www.un.org/en/observances/human-rights-day)



This celebrates the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948. It is now unfortunately a matter of topical interest in this country.

The website has the (quite short) text in multiple languages and formats, including an illustrated booklet.

There are ideas for actions, stories of human rights champions, a pledge to take, quizzes and much information – historical and current.

Each year the Day has a different theme, with resources such as posters and social media graphics.



And the winner is – books!

Every year, libraries and librarians spark national publicity – sometimes controversy – via the Carnegie and Kate Greenaway children’s book awards. They are run by CILIP and this year sponsored by Yoto. This year’s winners have plenty to say about books, reading for pleasure and the need to build empathy...



SHOWCASE

These are the UK’s longest running children’s book awards. The Carnegie dates back to 1936. The Kate Greenaway (the only national award for a children’s illustrator) dates back to 1955.

This makes them also the most prestigious. Judged entirely by librarians, they attract scores of entries. Winning is a huge fillip to a writer or illustrator’s career. They always get high-profile cover in the press, which is handy for libraries too.

Past winners form a roll-call of the greats of children’s literature. They include Arthur Ransome, C.S. Lewis, Terry Pratchett, Philip Pullman, Noel Streatfeild, Sally Gardner, Elizabeth Acevedo, Raymond Briggs, Shirley Hughes, Janet Ahlberg, Quentin Blake, Anthony Browne, Chris Riddell and Lauren Child.

You can get much more info, including author interviews, and even ‘attend’ the ceremony, via the website.

<https://carnegiegreenaway.org.uk>



The most short-sighted decision any political party could make...

Katya Balen’s *October* scored a rare double – it was voted tops by the judges, and also by the children who shadowed the awards. As Carnegie Medal Winner, she has harsh words for the politicians who are destroying proper, professionally-run libraries.

“Denying generations of children free and fair access to books feels like the most short-sighted decision any political party could make. Stories change lives, in a thousand huge and tiny ways.”

We are living in a golden age of children’s books. This was abundantly clear as I read the other seven books on the shortlist. They are full of life, loss, heartbreak, love, passion, beauty, brutality, and above all flawless writing. I loved them all.

In my book, *October* is a child who is isolated and disconnected from normal society. She grows up wild in the woods, not knowing other children, not knowing schools or roads or buses or Mars bars.

But she reads everything she can get her hands on, and she tells stories by firelight. She finds scraps of objects hidden in the woods, and she imagines their lives and moments that have made them.



Stories help her find her place. They keep her safe and they give her a thousand worlds other than her own.

When *October*’s world is turned upside down, and she is a mix of fury and confusion and fear and guilt and grief, the one thread that weaves its way through the old and the new is stories.

Telling them, finding them, listening to them, understanding them.

Stories start to spin fragile webs between *October* and those around her. They start to anchor her. And conversely, they start to open up her world.

They shape her and they connect her. They give her freedom and they give her wildness. They make her part of something and they make her herself. Stories save *October*.

When I first began working, it was in a variety of schools for children and young people with profound and multiple disabilities. Their needs were complex and varied, but something we could all share and delight in at once was a story.

SHADOW

The whole CKG concept was smartly updated in 2019. This saw the launch of a major project to give children themselves a say – the Shadowers' Choice awards.

Thousands of children in the UK and beyond, now vote for their own winners from the CKG shortlist. The awards are given due prominence by being presented at the main event.

Any children's book club, anywhere, can take part. Those who do, get massive support – their own website, background info on the books and their creators, plus a wealth of tips, activity ideas and advice. Plus promotional material, from posters to stickers. Some resources are produced with partners, ranging from publishers to Amnesty International. All free, of course.

It's a great way to get children to read and discuss books. The excitement of judging a competition adds spice. Many of the ideas work well for any reading group – including adult ones!

You can see all recent resources on the website, to inspire your own activities. If you want to join in formally for 2023, registration (to start when the shortlist is published in March) opens in November.

<https://carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/take-part>



Every person in the room was involved, engaged, delighted, in the same and different ways. In that space on the page, we could find a common ground that perhaps wasn't present at any other time in the day. We were all explorers, astronauts, having tigers over for tea, going on bear hunts, finding Gruffalos and learning spells.

Stories are for everyone, and for every child, regardless of their social circumstances, their postcode, their race, their sex, their abilities. They are so much more than words on a page.

They are an equaliser. They create empathy. They create connection. They create freedom.

They create escape. They create joy. They create change.

And this is not a privilege. This is a right.

So it seems to me a particular cruelty that in the last decade, funding cuts have closed nearly 800 libraries. Because stories can only be all of these wonderful things if they can be accessed.

Denying generations of children free and fair access to books feels like the most short-sighted decision any political party could make. Stories change lives, in a thousand huge and tiny ways.

Yes, we all know that better literacy equals better outcomes. But I'm talking about the bones

of stories and what they give us. Freedom. Wildness. Connection. Understanding.

Something small and private and beautiful that you can never quite name but that burns inside when you read something that feels like it was written just for you.

My local library in South Norwood was recently threatened with closure. A library in the London borough of Croydon, where around 35% of children speak English as a second language, and nearly 30% are on free school meals. In short, exactly where public money should be funnelled into public

services which can be accessed by all, for the benefit of all.

One solution that is often touted by councils is that members of the community volunteer to run libraries themselves.

This seems heartwarming. A community comes together in a time of need and the library stays open. Problem solved.

But this solution is wrong. It is an insult, championed by councils because it is free. But the one thing that makes libraries so vital is

those who run them. Librarians are experts, and we are not sick of them. They are the ones who know which book will bridge, which book will broaden, which book will comfort, which book will inspire.

They care about the right books being in the right hands, they know the stories that will strike a chord and create all of the magic I've spoken about. Their job is so multi-faceted, passionate, and informed. It deserves investment, and children deserve librarians.

Just like October, every child deserves to find their place through stories, to feel anchored, to feel safe, to feel connected, to feel joy and freedom and wildness. Every child deserves to know a thousand worlds other than their own.

That's why winning the Yoto Carnegie is so special – to be recognised by people who understand the true value of stories. What a privilege it is to play a small part in the alchemical magic of stories, and to be able to share those stories with the world.

Graphic novels – a different experience

Danica Novgorodoff's illustrations turned Long Way Down, by Jason Reynolds, into a graphic novel – the first to win the Kate Greenaway since 1973!* Graphic novels, she argues, are real books – and books are an essential life tool for children.

“There is no single way to tell a story. Graphic novels are one fascinating way to express emotions and ideas that can't be put into words alone.”

Interpreting Jason's text into images was its own reward, truly a dream project for me. Receiving this medal brings me so much joy to know that readers have found the book meaningful, too.

The work of an artist can be lonely. Sometimes I work for years without knowing if what I'm making will connect with readers. Jason's storytelling and poetry is magnificent, so I felt a great responsibility to make artwork that lived up to his writing.

Long Way Down is a book that asks us to empathise with a character who is planning to harm another person, and endanger his own life, out of grief and revenge. He's in a complicated, difficult situation, and he needs to make a very hard decision.

Through the illustrations, I wanted to show this emotional torment, to make his internal feelings come alive on the page. The book doesn't preach, but it asks readers: what do you feel, what would you do?

Books are a place for conversation, uncertainty, learning to think for yourself and ask



hard questions. They're a place to develop a moral compass, to learn to empathise with people who are different from you, or to feel compassion for people who are like you.

It is through books that we artists, writers, librarians, and teachers can empower young people to be caring humans and strong thinkers – just as young people inspire artists, writers, librarians, and teachers to show up every day, to do this hard work, to keep alive our hope for the future.

We can empower young people by letting them choose what books to read. Let them read whatever inspires them, excites them, entertains them.

Give them access to graphic novels! For some young people, graphic novels can be an especially engaging form of reading, and a gateway to all types of literature.

But graphic novels are also an extraordinary, complex, versatile medium in themselves, not dumbed down versions of 'real' books. You wouldn't discourage a kid from going to a museum to look at paintings or sculptures or photography. So why would you tell them not to look at artwork in a book?

We live in a world of pictures. Children grow up developing a visual intelligence, and an ability to read images far before they know how to read text.

Images are visceral in a different way than text. When an artwork moves you, it's speaking to you in a different language than words.

There is no single way to tell a story. Graphic novels are one fascinating way to express emotions and ideas that can't be put into words alone. When you have words and pictures collaborating on the page, it gives you access to a different experience of someone's life.

While creating this book, I've spent a lot of time thinking about and agonising over the crises of gun violence, racial injustice, and environmental racism.

All of us have a role to play in fighting these evils, and making the world a better place. And any action we can take begins with empathy, with understanding how complex and hard it is to live in this world.

We have a responsibility to give young people the chance to see themselves, as well as people unlike themselves, represented in books.

Through books, we can show young people that all children deserve to be loved and seen and respected, no matter what their skin colour, gender, or orientation is, no matter what kind of difficult situation they find themselves in.

And children have a responsibility to read books – all kinds of books – and to try to make sense of the world, to figure out: what is our place in this complicated, beautiful life? And what can we do to learn more, to understand more deeply, and to care for one another?

Keep reading...

* The 1973 winner was Raymond Briggs' Father Christmas.

Useful stuff ...

Here's a round-up of resources you can download – for your own information, to forward to others or to print out. Most are quite long, but there are some short ones that can be used as handy leaflets... And libraries are (of course) the obvious first point of call for anyone who ever needs information, help and a friendly welcome.

Q&A
A guide to finances, jobs and benefits for Ukrainian refugees and their UK hosts.

How long can Ukrainians stay as guests in UK homes?
Host families are asked to provide a home for Ukrainian guests for at least six months. After that, new arrivals will be expected to find a new host or accommodation of their own, unless the hosts extend their hospitality.

Once a host registers their interest on the government website, they share their offer on websites run by charities such as Opas, where refugees also go to search for accommodation.

What expenses are hosts expected to cover when providing a home for guests?
Hosts are expected only to offer their Ukrainian guests accommodation, not to cover food and living expenses – though some may wish to provide this. Hosts cannot charge guests rent or for any costs incurred but they can request what the UK government guide describes as "a reasonable contribution to any common household bills such as food and utilities".

Guests who feel they are being asked to contribute an unreasonable amount should raise the matter with the local council, which also inspects hosts' homes before refugees arrive.

Money
• Guests are entitled to an initial payment of £200 from the local council to help with the costs of settling in and meeting their immediate needs.
• Hosts are entitled to an optional payment of £300 a month for up to a year, though they are free to refuse the money if they don't need it.

What do refugees need to open a bank account?
Banks typically ask for:
• An address (can be the host's)
• Ukrainian passport or national identity card
• Documentation showing the person's immigration status, such as a biometric residence permit (BRP) which, according to the government, refugees on a visa can collect on arrival.
This document which provides evidence from some readers suggests they take some time to obtain, serves as proof of guests' right to work and to rent property.
While guests can apply for a bank account online, most lenders suggest

A charity called Flic (Financial Literacy & Inclusion Campaign) is run by the Financial Times and aims to 'promote financial literacy where it is needed most'. It has produced a leaflet, in Ukrainian and English, to answer basic questions about anything from accessing benefits and work to driving licences and pets.

<https://ftflic.com/do-you-know-any-organisations-supporting-refugees>

Ласкаво просимо
Посібник про гроші, роботу, пенсії та життя у Великобританії

Скільки раз більше українціям вдалося побувати до Великобританії, журналісти та редактори Financial Times створили посібник, який допоможе потенційним господарям та їхнім гостям. Багато українців у останні місяці переїзду до країни та поселення тут. Цей матеріал створено в рамках спільної FT, співпраці на позичення фінансової грамотності та знань. Завдяки їй українці, поїздили у нашу країну, будуть ознайомлені з міру тут, як знаходити місце проживання «бітко» для України чи імплементувати нові знання.

• Чи є фінансовий термін перебування українців як гостей на програмі «Життя для України» у Великобританії, і якщо так, то як працює, коли цей термін закінчиться?

Британський уряд просить старору, нові приїзди, забезпечити житлові свої українцями гостям запроваджені на термін. Після цього перебути, як, якщо господар не пропонує, знайти місце у гостинній компанії і надій, використовувати навіть новий спосіб життя або власне поселення. Коли господар, як виступив, має прийняти українського гостя, розглянути його задоволення на запрошений веб-сайт, який вказує на дієвий спосіб пропозицій на веб-сторінках такої британської організації, як «Opas», на якій є список доступних гостинь і сайт бізнесу.

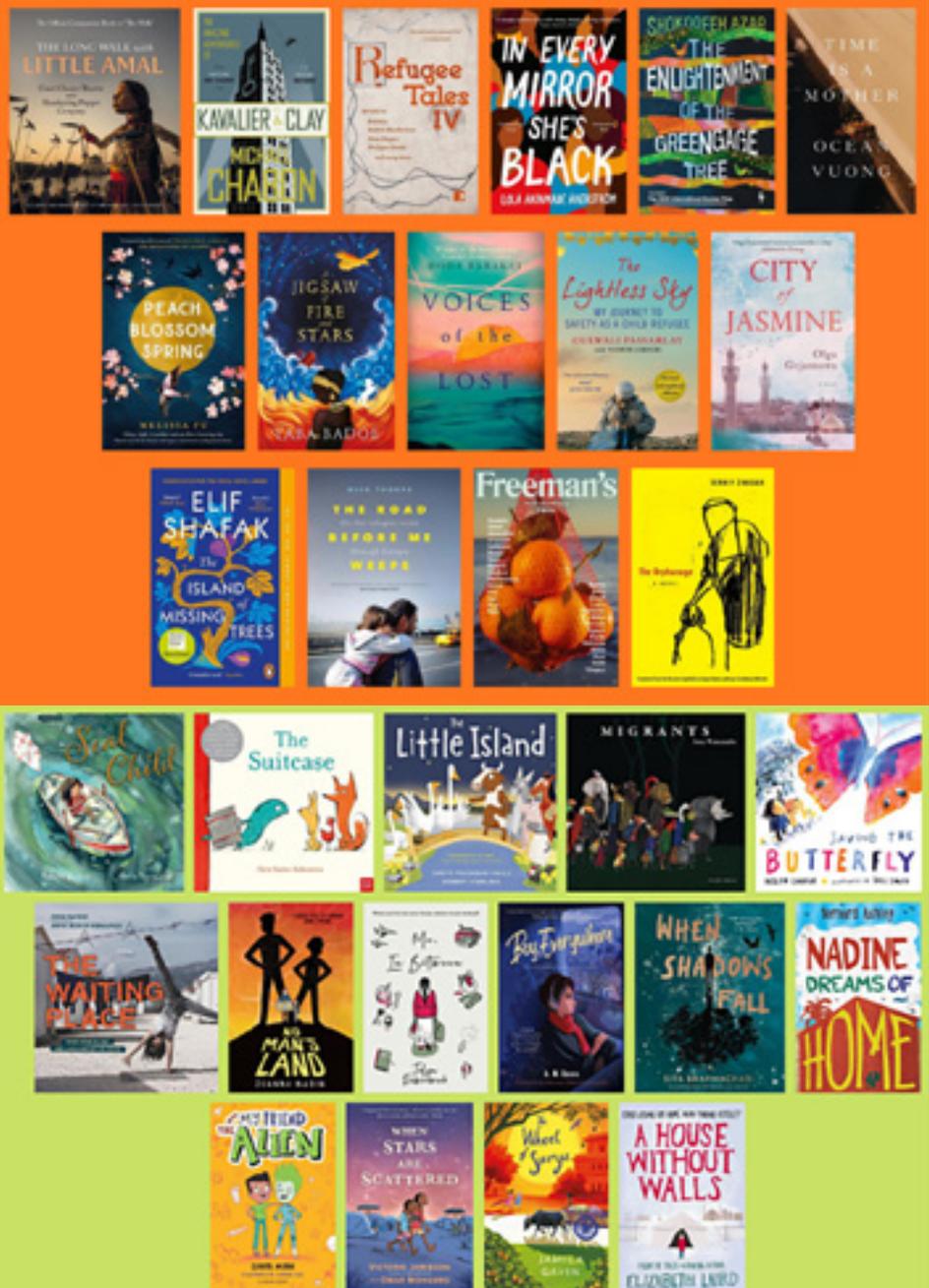
• Як виступити українцями бути попередити господарем, коли він відкрито запровадити українців бізнесу? Оскільки, як господар запровадити місце проживання гостя, і не добувати попередити гостя на запрошення та пропозиції – коли дані, відповідно, використовувати відповідно і ці. Господарі не можуть створювати новий спосіб життя або будувати нові знання, але вони можуть використати те, що британський уряд, намагаючись пропонувати знання у швидко змінюється

REFUGEES

Books – both fiction and non-fiction – can do much to help people understand the truth about refugees and the issues that affect them.

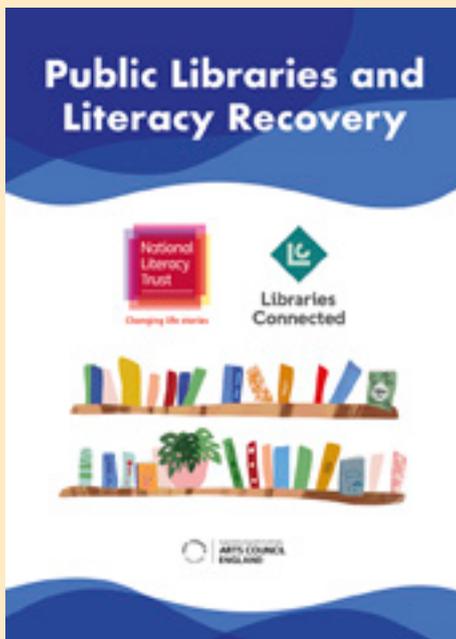
The Reading Agency has compiled two lists of books, one for adults and one for children. All are written by and about refugees or former refugees, and explore the struggles, achievements, bravery, resilience and strength of refugees around the world.

<https://readingagency.org.uk/resources/5951>



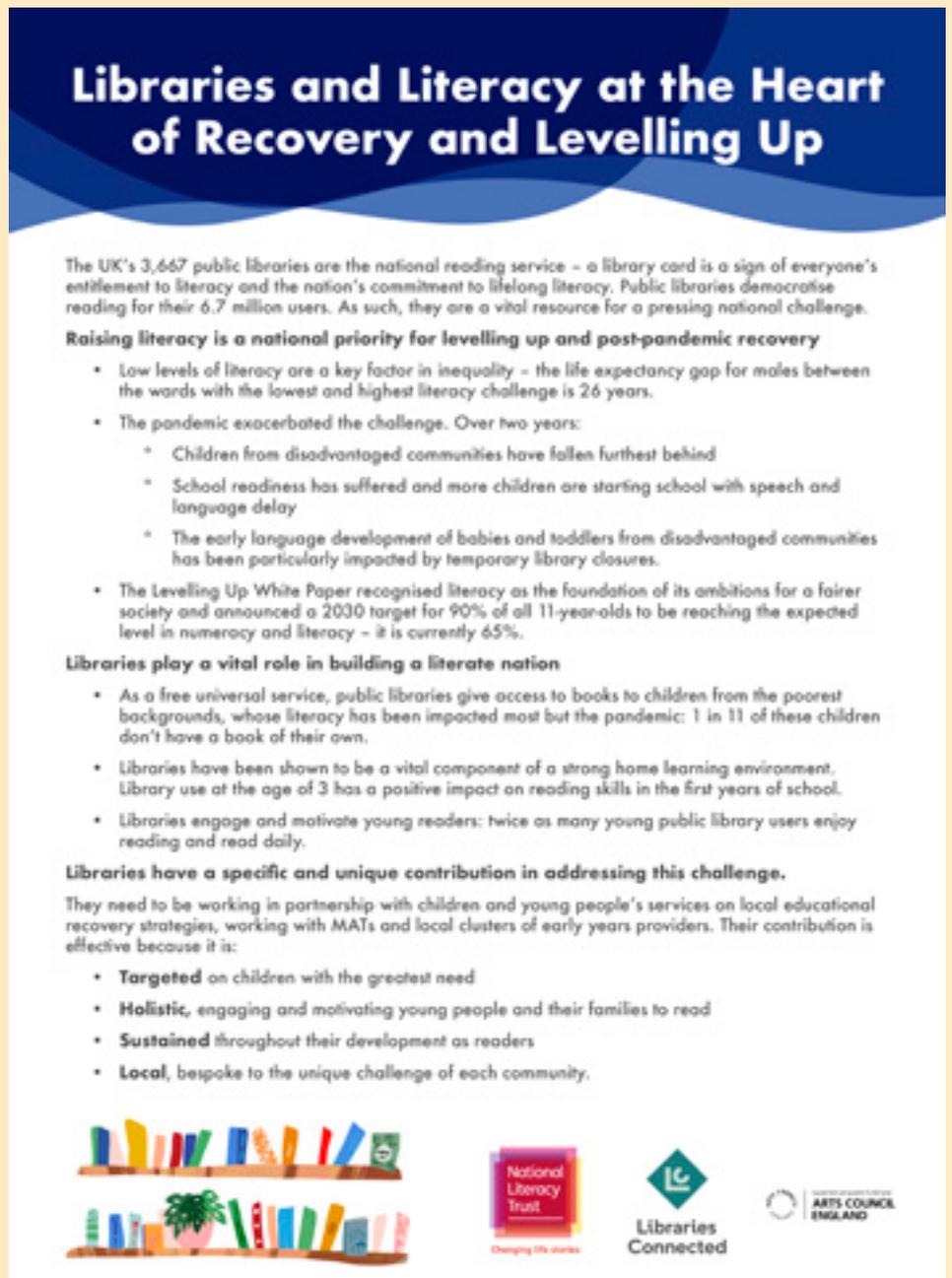
Literacy means libraries!

Good news – the government has named literacy as one of the (many) goals proposed for its Levelling Up project. The pandemic has done a lot of damage, so it's more urgent than ever to start catching up. Good news – a timely new report argues the obvious point that libraries are central to any effort to improve literacy. Good news – the ministers for libraries and for education are backing it. And they acknowledge that both sectors must work together. Bad news – the education minister recently resigned. So it goes...



The report* was commissioned by Libraries Connected, and compiled by the National Literacy Trust (funded by Arts Council England). It's not painfully long, but it crams in lots of detail and references, especially about the effects of the pandemic. Plus case histories of successful local literacy projects. And it equips anyone who needs to make the case with resources – the report itself, a Powerpoint presentation and a handy one-page summary (right). Here we present some extracts...

* <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/libraries-key-closing-post-pandemic-literacy-gap-new-report-reveals>



This is the one-sheet summary. You can print it out A4 size.



Public libraries (figures pre-COVID-19)

- 3,667 public libraries serve the communities of the UK (CIPFA, 2020).
- There are 7.3 million active borrowers at libraries in the UK (CIPFA, 2020) (NB 2m people participate in football annually).
- 214 million visits take place each year, with an additional 131 million total online visits (CIPFA, 2020).
- Libraries issue almost 165 million books a year (CIPFA, 2020).
- More likely to be used by minority ethnic communities than White communities (DCMS, 2019)

THE TARGET

In England there is a strong, reinforcing link between social disadvantage and low literacy. For this reason, the government has announced a target to increase the number of children attaining expected levels in maths and literacy to 90% by 2030, as central to the Levelling Up agenda...

By placing reading at the heart of the Levelling Up agenda, the government is recognising these relationships, and the

vital role of literacy in creating opportunities and building successful communities. This agenda challenges not just schools, but all who have a role in supporting literacy and reading, to take urgent action to build a literate nation.

Public libraries have a powerful and unique role in this campaign. They must be vital partners in the mission to break the link between social background and literacy.

THE POVERTY LINK

As well as creating poverty, low literacy is also led by poverty. At just five years old, children from the most disadvantaged communities can start primary school up to 19 months behind their better-off peers in terms of vocabulary.

This is a deficit most will never recover from. At GCSE, almost three in five (58.6%) disadvantaged students fail to achieve a good grade in English and maths, compared with one in three (35.4%) students overall.

This mutually reinforcing pattern of inequality and low literacy affects outcomes beyond economic impact. Low literacy is linked to poor health, with 43% of working-age adults in England lacking the literacy skills they need to understand and make use of everyday health information ('health literacy').

HOW LIBRARIES FIGHT POVERTY

Public libraries challenge one of the key causes of the literacy gap related to social disadvantage.

In a society where book ownership, reading and literacy are strongly related to socio-economic status, they offer free access to books to everyone.

But their services and support for reading and literacy go well beyond this. They have a central role in increasing skills in disadvantaged communities to support levelling up, and in addressing the impact of the pandemic on literacy.

The activities they already offer will help many of the children and families who most need support. There is also the opportunity for libraries to participate in local partnership activities that have been developed to address literacy challenges. This holistic approach to reading addresses social, cultural and educational needs and can also be sustained.

Literacy attainment and using a public library

Reading levels	Public library users	Non public library users
Below expected level for their age	36.7%	63.3%
At expected level for their age	48.9%	51.1%
Above expected level for their age	64.5%	35.5%

Clark and Hawkins, 2011

THE STARTING POINT

The challenge is considerable. In 2019, only 65% of children left primary school with expected levels of literacy.

The OECD has identified that one in six adults in England faces literacy challenges. England has one of the strongest links between low literacy and socio-economic status of any country in

the developed world.

Struggling to read in England is more closely linked to low pay and the risk of being unemployed than in any other developed country.

Children with poor vocabulary at age five are more than twice as likely to be unemployed when they are aged 34.

The power of reading for enjoyment

"Enjoyment of reading has a greater impact on a child's educational achievement than their parents' socioeconomic status."
OECD Reading for Change, 2002

"Reading for pleasure was found to be more important for children's cognitive development between ages 10 and 16 than their parents' level of education."

"The combined effect on children's progress of reading books often, going to the library regularly and reading newspapers at 16 was four times greater than the advantage children gained from having a parent with a degree."

"Children's leisure reading is important for educational attainment and social mobility."
Sullivan and Brown, 2015



READING FOR PLEASURE IS THE KEY

For many children the library is the place where they discover their reading identities, freely choosing the books that interest them and experiencing the fun and excitement of being part of a reading community.

Libraries provide children with the opportunity to experiment as readers, providing access to new genres, titles and authors. With greater choice often comes greater enjoyment, encouraging children to read more because they enjoy it.

A vital ingredient of this is social reading experiences.

Reading challenges and reading groups add a new dimension to the reading experience. They enable

children to read more, read more widely and have a more enjoyable and satisfying reading experience.

Importantly, the benefits of literacy are most powerfully realised when reading for pleasure is appreciated as a vital ingredient.

Reading for pleasure supports increased literacy skills via vocabulary growth and increasing reading fluency. If all school-aged children in the UK read for pleasure every day, the number getting five good GCSEs by the age of 16 could increase by 1.1 million within 30 years.



WHAT THE PANDEMIC DID

The pandemic has exacerbated the literacy challenge. Despite the huge achievements of the education and library sectors in supporting children's reading during closures, it is now apparent that the disruption caused by the pandemic has influenced children's literacy in a number of ways:

- Children from disadvantaged communities have fallen furthest behind;
- School readiness has suffered, and more children are starting school with speech and language delay;
- The early language development of babies and toddlers from disadvantaged communities has been particularly impacted by temporary library closures.

Many children have returned to school with a strong appetite for learning. Progress is being made with students catching up. However, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are not making the rapid gains seen by other children. Children also shared that a lack of a quiet space at home and the absence of teacher and peer support at school affected their motivation to read. The free access to books and quiet(er) spaces offered by libraries may be particularly relevant to the literacy recovery of these groups of children.

Children in the early years were particularly affected. The impact on early language will mean that the education system will be dealing with the impact of the pandemic for the next two decades, possibly longer, as literacy patterns are strongly intergenerational.

LIBRARIES' SPECIAL ROLE

Local authorities, schools and multi-academy trusts continue to develop plans for supporting children and young people whose literacy has been impacted by the pandemic. Many are developing approaches in partnership with public libraries.

Increasingly, libraries are key players in local literacy campaigns through their ability to engage and inspire young readers, to support families in developing language and communication skills during the early years, and to reach children from disadvantaged backgrounds with free access to books.

Four themes characterise libraries' responses to the literacy challenge:

TARGETED

Libraries are expert at delivering approaches that focus on disadvantaged communities, where literacy is lowest, book ownership and reading habits are weakest, and where the educational impact of the pandemic is strongest. Libraries have a specific role to play in supporting reading in these communities. They have an excellent track record of working in multi-agency partnerships in these areas.

HOLISTIC

The impact of the pandemic on children's literacy has been prompted by the interruption of schooling, but also by its social effects and the disruption of play, families and cultural activities. Through reading clubs, holiday activities and early years rhyme times, public libraries can support not just literacy skills but the social, emotional and cultural elements of literacy.

Vitality, their expertise in supporting reading for pleasure means that they can help develop and strengthen the intrinsic motivation to read and learn, which is so vital to a child's future life chances.

SUSTAINED

Research has already demonstrated the impact of the pandemic on the language development of disadvantaged babies and toddlers. It is clear that for the next two decades the shape of the literacy challenge will be profoundly influenced by the pandemic.

Reading is at the heart of the mission of public libraries. They are in a position to be long-term partners to schools, colleges and settings, shaping the literacy skills and reading behaviours of a generation.

LOCAL

The effects of the pandemic are unique to every community. Libraries are uniquely positioned to craft local strategic responses working with schools, settings and colleges, based on their insight and knowledge of the community.

MINISTERS GET THE MESSAGE

Through their day-to-day work, libraries support early-years development, giving children a fun and welcoming introduction to language skills. They complement the critical literacy work done in the classroom by providing children with free, universal access to the rich world of opportunity that can be unlocked by reading for pleasure.

From comics to classics and reference books to bestsellers, public libraries empower independent reading and learning, unconstrained by cost.

Working in partnership with schools, libraries can reach out especially to the most disadvantaged children and those who do not have books readily available at home, to boost their access and help them realise their full future potential.

As plans are put in place nationally and locally to support post-pandemic educational recovery, this report clearly demonstrates why libraries need to be integral to them.

I am pleased to be providing [a] foreword alongside my colleague Robin Walker, Minister of State for School Standards, as a demonstration of how important we think this collaboration is across government.

Lord Parkinson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Arts)

I welcome this report, which identifies the important role of libraries in fostering a love of reading and helping children who have suffered educational disruption as a result of the pandemic.

By ensuring all young people – particularly those from disadvantaged communities – have access to a range of literature, and by complementing the work of schools in supporting early language and literacy, libraries can help achieve the government's Levelling Up agenda.

The government is committed to continuing to raise literacy standards, including those of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. I am pleased to champion the importance of reading widely and often, and the important role public libraries play in ensuring all children are able to do so.

Robin Walker MP
Minister of State for School Standards





After the June beer and bunting, there's still a jubilee feast for book-lovers. The Reading Agency (TRA) has compiled a book list for each of the seven decades since 1952.

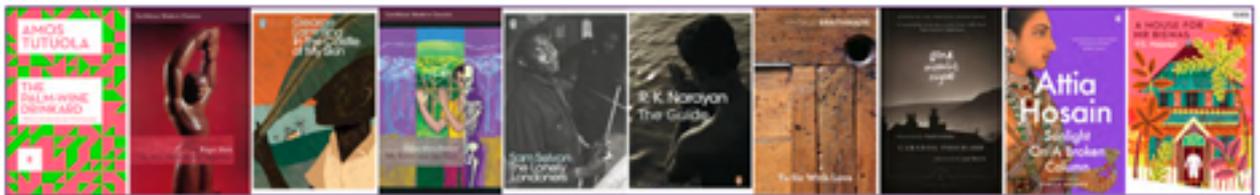
All place emphasis on the Commonwealth as a way to interpret each decade (to highlight the Commonwealth Games) – though this theme is widely interpreted. There's information online about every book, plus scope to share notes and recommendations. And each decade has its set of themed questions, to spark discussion on any listed book you (or your group) might choose to read.

Get it all here: <https://readinggroups.org/big-jubilee-read>

And there's more! TRA and Libraries Connected are also hosting a series of author events, again with a Commonwealth theme. Of course, you can join in online. Find out more and sign for updates here: <https://readinggroups.org/news/watch-the-big-jubilee-read>

1952--1961

On 6 February 1952, Queen Elizabeth ascended to the British throne and in turn, became Head of the Commonwealth. Over the next decade the Commonwealth grew to include the newly independent nations of Ghana, Nigeria, Cyprus, and Sierra Leone. Writers from across the Commonwealth were being regularly published in the English language. This resulted in an increased popularity of their books that reflected the increasing diversity of the United Kingdom in the post-war period.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- What do you believe "home" means to the characters in your book(s) and how does it affect their actions?
- Many of the texts in this decade present a tussle between the past, the present and the future. How does this feature in the book(s) you have read?
- Some of these books are autobiographical, do you think it is important to know about the author's own identity when reading a novel?
- The 1950s marked the start of the post-war era, how does your book explore a changing world?
- Inequality affects the lives of a lot of the characters in these books. What examples of this are there in the book(s) you have read?
- How does the language the writer uses make you think about the characters' situations?
- What are the motivating forces of the protagonist in your book and how is that reflected in the world that they inhabit?
- What other books published between 1952-61 would you recommend?

1962--1971

The sixties marked a turning point in cultural and political history. For the Commonwealth, it signalled the start of the rapid acceleration of decolonisation across the Caribbean and Africa. The collapse of the Federation of the West Indies led to countries in the region becoming independent. Over the next decade, Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados all joined the Commonwealth as independent states, alongside other countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Singapore and Fiji. This decade also saw the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting convene where the Singapore Declaration was issued, laying out the core political values that would go on to define the Commonwealth.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- The 1960s are seen as the moment youth culture exploded. How does your text(s) represent youth?
- The impact of colonialism, past and present, is represented in many different ways in these texts. How is this portrayed in your book(s) and in what ways does it affect the narrative?
- The 1960s saw advances in gender equality around the world. How are women represented in your book(s)?
 - How do the protagonists in the text(s) deal with figures of authority?
- The concept of masculinity is central to some of the texts in this decade, what comment do you think the author is trying to make in your book(s)?
 - Does religion play a role in your text(s)? If so, how?
- What linguistic choices does the author(s) of your text(s) make? Why have they chosen to use language in this way?
 - What other books published between 1962-71 would you recommend?

1972--1981

The seventies marked an era of technological advancement and a continuation of the acceleration of decolonisation. Between 1972 and 1981, Bangladesh, The Bahamas, Grenada, Papua New Guinea and Belize would become independent and join the Commonwealth of Nations. In 1977, The Queen's Silver Jubilee was celebrated as she set off on a year-long tour of Commonwealth countries. In 1979, the Lusaka Declaration added opposition to discrimination on the basis of gender to the Commonwealth's objectives, expanding its commitment to equality.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- The 1970s introduced a wave of technological advancements that would set the tone for the modern world. What sort of vision of the future does your text(s) represent?
- Many of these books explore family as a key theme. What role do family relationships play in the book(s) you've read?
- Some of the texts in this decade feature elements of science fiction. Why do you think the authors have decided to explore this genre for their books?
- Prejudice is a key issue in some of the books in this decade. How is the protagonist of the book(s) you've read impacted by prejudice?
 - How does your text(s) portray national identity?
- Secrecy works to cloud the truth behind a lot of personal relationships in these books. How does this contribute to character development?
- Many of the texts in this decade are historical novels or involve confrontations with the past. How does your book(s) examine history?
 - What other books published between 1972-81 would you recommend?

1982-1991

The eighties signalled a period of unprecedented change as social and geographical barriers broke down and the world became an increasingly more connected place. At the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the Langkawi Declaration was issued committing Commonwealth members to environmental sustainability. The following meeting in 1991 resulted in the Harare Declaration, re-establishing the core principles of the Commonwealth, and detailing its membership criteria. In this period, the Maldives, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Brunei and Namibia all joined the Commonwealth as independent states.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- As the world witnessed major events in this decade, such as the end of the Cold War and the start of the negotiations to end apartheid in South Africa, why do you think some of the texts in this decade focus on settings where humanity is at its cruellest?
 - How does your text(s) examine the idea of family?
- There was a rapid rise in women's employment in this period across the world. How is a woman's role in society presented in the text(s), and what message is the author trying to convey in it?
- Two of the texts in this decade are collections of poetry. What poetic techniques does the writer use and how do they impact your reading?
 - How does your text(s) examine the continuing effects of imperialism?
 - What role does faith play in your text(s)?
- How are characters impacted by their heritage? In what ways does it make their life more challenging and how do they confront it?
 - What other books published between 1982-91 would you recommend?

1992-2001

The nineties ushered in the age of the Internet. The beginnings of social media and globalisation led to a new world of relative prosperity. With the end of Apartheid, South Africa returned to the Commonwealth in 1994. Cameroon and Mozambique joined the Commonwealth in 1995, the latter becoming the first country to join without any constitutional ties to an existing member. In 1998, the Commonwealth Games were hosted in Kuala Lumpur, the first to be held in Asia.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- With the decade being defined by so much new technology, why do you think many of the writers of books selected in this period decided to look backwards in setting their book? Why did they choose that period of history?
 - How does social inequality affect the characters in your book(s)?
- In some of the books in this decade, animals play an important role. What do you they represent or symbolise?
 - How do secrets affect the characters' relationships in your text(s)?
 - How does power manifest in your book(s) and is it always a problematic force?
 - How does political conflict affect the motivations of characters in your book(s)?
- As the world became more connected in this decade, how does your book handle characters being away from their homes?
 - What other books published between 1992-01 would you recommend?

2002--2011

In 2002, the Commonwealth celebrated The Queen's Golden Jubilee and fifty years as its Head. Throughout that year, Her Majesty travelled across the Commonwealth, visiting member countries. Around the globe, people were engaging with a new wave of social media platforms, creating a more globalised, connected world. In 2009, Rwanda became the most recent addition to the Commonwealth. In that same year, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, leader of Trinidad and Tobago became the first female chair of the Commonwealth of Nations.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- Many of these novels are set against the background of war. How are the characters' circumstances affected by this?
- Many of these books are historical fiction. In what ways are you able to relate to the story?
- How are the characters' secrets uncovered in your text and how does that change your perception of them?
- The city plays an important role as the setting of many of these books. How do the characters react to it, and what effect does it have on the narrative?
- Power is an important theme in these texts. Who holds it in your book(s) and how do they use it?
 - How does your text(s) explore the breakdown of relationships?
- A lot of the characters in these texts are far from the place they would call home. How do they deal with this in your book(s)?
 - What other books published between 2002-11 would you recommend?

2012--2021

The teens was a decade of increasing digital consumption as the world signed up to be a part of streaming culture. It also saw great steps forward in LGBTQ+ equality across the world, including among many Commonwealth countries. In 2022, we celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and 70 years since becoming Head of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth currently has 54 member states and connects over 2.4 billion people across the world.



These questions can be used by your reading group whether you have read one or all of the books from this decade.

- Most of these books examine experiences in different countries in the Commonwealth. Did your book(s) introduce you to any historical moments that you were unaware of?
- Some characters in this decade's books experience prejudice and disadvantage. What barriers or challenges do they face?
- Some of the texts in this period have intertwining narratives. Why do you think the author(s) chose to use this technique and how do the narratives connect to each other?
- Many of the characters in these novels experience violence in different forms, such as war or domestic abuse. How does the writer present violence, and why do you think they included it?
- The geography of some of these books is a vital part to their characters stories. What impact do you think setting has?
- Death plays an important role in some of this decade's titles. How is it presented in the text and what effect does it have on the characters?
- Hopes and dreams motivate a lot of the characters in these texts. How is this presented in your book(s) and do any of the characters achieve theirs?
 - What other books published between 2012-22 would you recommend?

