

# **A strategy for Lancashire's libraries 2016-21**

## **Making a difference through reading, learning and information**

### **Foreword from the Cabinet member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services**

The strategy for the Lancashire Library service outlines our promises as a public library authority, the priorities we will focus on and the outcomes we aim to deliver for the people who live and work in Lancashire.

The strategy outlines our commitment to the continuing delivery and development of a flexible and accessible public library service in Lancashire, building on a strong tradition and celebration of our past and continuing achievements. We have a clear direction for the future and have firm ambitions which link in with those of the Society of Chief Librarians: reading, information, digital, health, learning and culture offers.

It is a strategy that directly responds to the emerging needs of our communities, placing them at the heart of service development, and outlines how we will work with other organisations to deliver a comprehensive, responsive, modern and value for money Lancashire Library service.

A cornerstone of this modern and flexible service will be our digital offer, recognising that, although financial pressures are real and continue to build, we will also have opportunities to exploit emerging digital technologies. By exploiting these technologies for the benefit of the communities we serve we will aim to equip people with the learning and skills needed to succeed in an ever more competitive and fast changing world.

Lancashire has a justifiably proud record of working with all members of our communities and we will work even harder to make sure services are relevant and reflect the cultural diversity of the people we serve. We will challenge established thinking and ways of working in a constructive and creative way to enable us to deliver an innovative and value for money service which is able to adapt and thrive in this uncertain economic climate.

The ambition of the strategy reflects proven outcomes that library services can deliver for their communities – raising aspirations, increasing pride, stimulating the enjoyment of culture, and helping people to live independent lives. It aligns our service priorities to the County Council's draft Corporate Strategy, "that every child born today in Lancashire, and every citizen will grow up and live in a community and an environment that enables them to live healthier for longer, have a job when they leave education and achieve their full potential throughout life."

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## Background

This strategy has been informed by and supports the message and ambitions of the following three key documents:

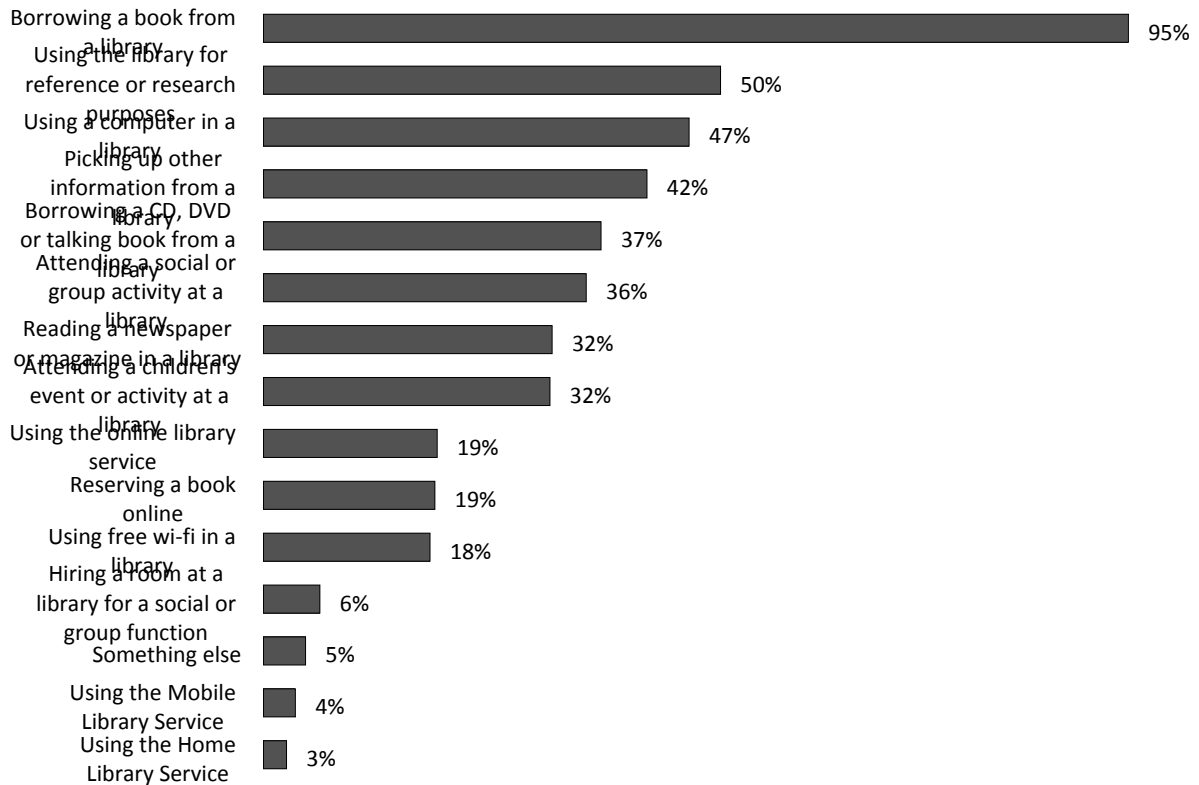
- Lancashire County Council's Draft Corporate Strategy  
<http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/council/strategies-policies-plans/corporate/corporate-strategy.aspx>.
- The society of Chief Librarians Universal offers of Reading, Information, Digital, Health and Learning:  
[Society of Chief Librarians \(SCL\) Universal Offers](#)
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sports paper [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England in 2016 – 21](#).
- The Lancashire Library Service Planning and Needs Assessment.

In setting out our own strategy for the Lancashire Library Service we will make reference to and be guided by the above documents but we also understand that in order to achieve our highest ambitions we must have an in depth understanding of our communities. We have always sought to be guided by the people we serve and draw our inspiration from them in setting our goals and detailing our ambitions. This strategy therefore is a result of listening to what our citizens deem important and reflecting that in this document but more importantly embedding this in the way we deliver our services.

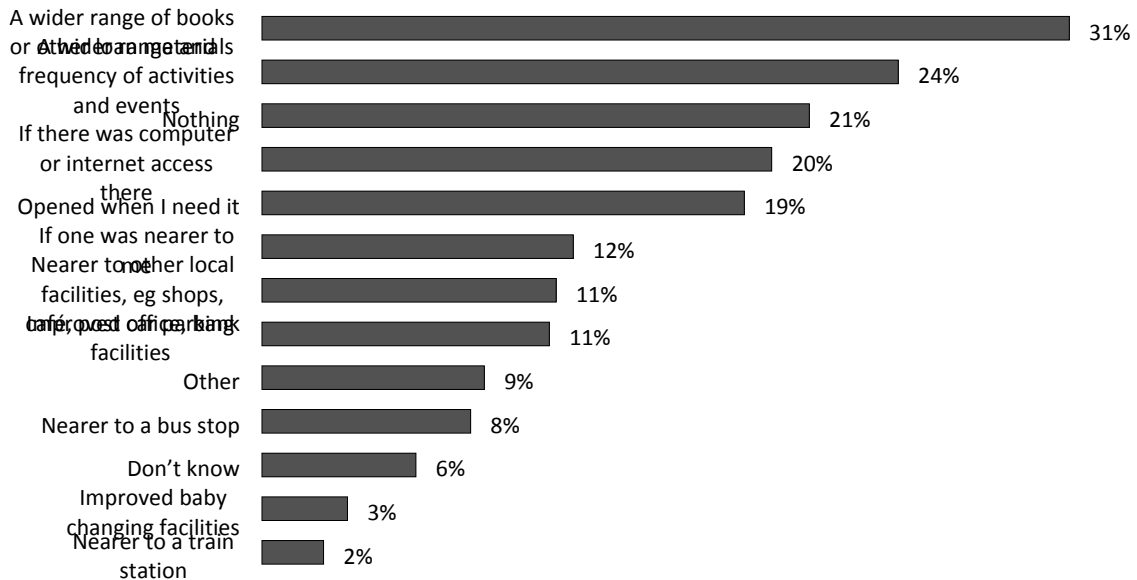
To ensure we can do this in a meaningful way we have found out how people feel we are doing in living up to our promises and how far our ambitions for the service match the aspirations of the people who live and work in Lancashire. We did this by carrying out a wide ranging consultation on service design, need and use between the 4 and 31 January 2016.

Overall 86% of respondents to our consultation were very satisfied with the library service in Lancashire with a further 11% fairly satisfied.

As part of the January 2016 survey we asked which of the following library services people considered to be the most important. The results are detailed below:



Respondents to the consultation also told us that the following would encourage them to use the libraries in Lancashire more:



We will use this feedback to carefully consider where we can improve and where we should focus our investment as well as reviewing and refreshing our approach to the continued development of the strategy.

We are committed to providing comprehensive access to library services for people unable to attend a library building in person. This will form part of our core offer detailed later on in this strategy.

Lancashire County Council's draft Corporate Strategy (December 2015) was produced in some of the most challenging circumstances in the history of local government. In future the Council's community presence will take the form of neighbourhood centres. These will be community focussed, multi-functional buildings delivering a mix of universal and targeted services tailored to the area they are located in.

Neighbourhood centres will be the base for the provision of services currently delivered through:

- Children's centres,
- Youth Zones
- Libraries
- Child and parenting support centres
- Adult disability centres.

Our strategy is based on regular consultation and feedback with our customers and we intend to take advantage of proposed opportunities to work with partners and the community neighbourhood centres in delivering the best possible services.

A further consultation on the County Council's Property Strategy, which included proposals on where we should site building based library services took place between May and August 2016. The volume of feedback that we received through the consultation, as well as petitions and correspondence, indicates that people in Lancashire are concerned about reductions in library service provision and the potential loss of community assets. The results of the consultation have now been analysed and have informed our proposals on the future provision of building based library services.

The consultation feedback will also inform the future delivery of the library service. The library service will be delivered through 4 library levels; from library level 1 to level 4. These levels will reflect as far as possible the current library opening hours. It is envisaged that, throughout the next 5 years of the strategy, this framework of levels will allow us to develop a flexible and dynamic service which will address local need, as we continue to review and develop the service. This is the practice we have adopted in the past and we will continue to regularly consult with our communities on opening times and service delivery.

## Our vision and strategic objectives

"A library service which is embedded and flourishing at the heart of Lancashire communities and community life and which makes a difference through reading, learning and information".

The Library service has set out its strategic objectives are to:

- Provide helpful and knowledgeable staff
- Encourage people to enjoy reading
- Provide spaces to enjoy culture and learning
- Provide easy to use online services
- Help people reach their potential and live independent lives
- Support our communities to stay healthy
- Provide opportunities for volunteers to help in our libraries.

We have checked these objectives with our customers, asking respondents what they thought the Lancashire County Library Service should provide, in line with the service's strategic objectives.

93% strongly agreed we should provide helpful and knowledgeable staff and 91% said we should encourage people to enjoy reading. 71% strongly agreed we should provide spaces to enjoy culture and learning, 64% easy to use online services and help people reach their potential and live independent lives. 59% said support for communities to stay healthy and 48% strongly agreed that there should be opportunities for volunteers to help in libraries.

These strategic objectives link in with and will enable us to deliver the seven key strands set out in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport document *Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021* as follows:

- economic change through learning and digital literacy
- promoting reading and literacy
- 24/7 virtual offer
- buildings that provide cultural and learning experiences
- opportunities for volunteers
- health and wellbeing
- development of the library workforce.

We will ensure that Lancashire Libraries deliver a high quality library service that is sustainable and remains relevant to the people of Lancashire. We will work in close partnership with local communities, invest in the digital future and provide access to reading, information and wellbeing.

To achieve this, we will:

- **Inspire** people to enjoy books and reading
- **Stimulate** new ideas and new ways of thinking through access to learning, information and local heritage
- **Engage** with communities to encourage cultural and creative activities
- **Deliver** excellent and inclusive customer services for all

### **Proud of our past, ambitious for the future**

Lancashire's libraries play an important role in the lives of individuals and communities. The profile of our customers across the county closely matches the profile of Lancashire's population and more than 42% of all Lancashire residents hold a library card. With more than 93,500 visits to our libraries each week, library visits represent the largest regular voluntary interaction the County Council enjoys with individual members of the community.

Every year, more than 374,700 information enquiries are answered, 4.9 million items are loaned, 5491 cultural, learning, reading and community events are delivered.

In addition there have been 70,174 visits to the Online Reference Library, 316,946 visits to the eBook and e-Audiobook download library as well as 1,473,938 website visits and 832,682 sessions taking place on public library computers.

In 2015/16 39,066 children attended baby bounce and rhyme sessions and 910 people attended 24 health promotion events. Over the same period we trained 20 staff as dementia champions and 428 as dementia friends.

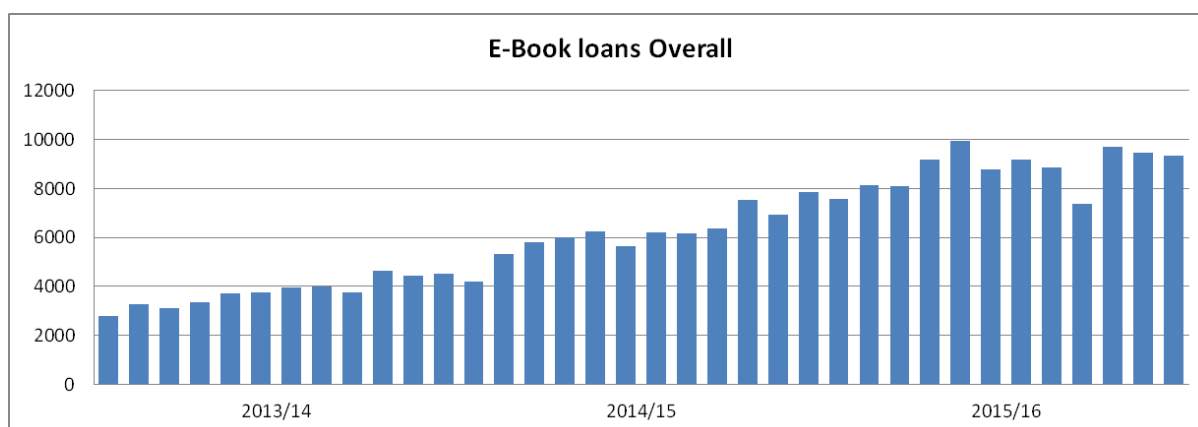
Our Home Library Service provides a service to approximately 1,000 people who are not able to attend at a static library. These customers are vulnerable and/or housebound.

The mobile library service currently stops at almost 800 places across Lancashire. Predominantly these 'stops' are 3 miles or more from any static library.

Lancashire hasn't escaped the effects of a national downward trend in physical visits to libraries and the corresponding reduction in the number of traditional materials borrowed.

In contrast we are seeing an increase in virtual visits to our website over the past 3 years from 12,486 in 2013/14 to 48,322 in 14/15 and 69,886 in 15/16 representing year on year increases of 287% and 44.6%.

Loans of e-books are also rising year on year as illustrated in the chart below:



The Service is also connected to many organisations, both large and small, from providing meeting rooms to being commissioned to deliver specific services.

The attraction of working with libraries for many organisations lies in their ability to connect with their communities on a local level. The service is neutral and engenders trust in people. Libraries are uniquely positioned in terms of the amount of customer interaction they have within their immediate community and sometimes far beyond.

The County Council has a statutory duty enshrined in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all people working, living or in full time education within the library area of the Council.

It is important that we consider this duty in line with the County Council's vision, and also within the context of recent national developments, to ensure that Lancashire's library service remains effective, innovative and fit for purpose.

The following quote is taken from William Sieghart & Panel, [Independent Library Report for England](#) DCMS, 2014 which informed the work being undertaken by the Library taskforce whose report is one of the key references for this strategy: Department for Culture, Media and Sports paper [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England in 2016 – 21](#).

*“Libraries are, let us not forget, a golden thread throughout our lives... The library does more than simply loan books. It underpins every community. It is not just a place for self-improvement, but the supplier of an infrastructure for life and learning, from babies to old age, offering support, help, education, and encouraging a love of reading. Whether you wish to apply for a job, or seek housing benefit, or understand your pension rights or the health solutions available to you, or learn to read, the library can assist.”*

Libraries across Lancashire assist people in all the ways mentioned above and we know that good libraries play an important part in shaping how the local authority is perceived by the people living and working in a given area. The library service, for the majority of County Council service users in any given year, will be the only contact they have with County Council employees.



We know, however, that people want even more than this and 36% of our customers tell us that attending a social or group activity at a library is the **most** important service a library can provide. We don't know how many of our customers would have limited or no social contact without their library but we do know the vital importance the library can play in helping to maintain the independence and enhance the self-worth of the most deprived people living in Lancashire today.

The following quote from The Department for Culture, Media and Sports paper [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England in 2016 – 21](#) expands on this point.

*"Libraries are cultural hubs within our local communities and are places for inspiration, research, creativity, education, economic prosperity and enjoyment. They help people gain a sense of place and take pride in their neighbourhoods and communities..."*

Libraries also provide access and signposting to wider cultural activities, objects, knowledge and sites. They encourage people to explore their own culture and creativity, and offer the deep wealth of resources that creative people use for inspiration."

As part of this commitment and in recognition of the value such partnerships can offer we have launched a co-design project with colleagues at Lancaster University's Imagination laboratory. This project will draw on the expertise of colleagues at Lancaster University to work with the library service, children's centre staff and property professionals to design and develop creative and innovative shared spaces which will maximise staff and community involvement in finding new ways of working and delivering services.

As we move forward we will expand and build on the innovative and collaborative work with Lancaster University. We will also take the learning from Camden's work with the University for the Creative Arts, which has created different ways of managing library services within reduced budgets, and aim to be at the cutting edge of working in physical and virtual environments.

### **Our evidence base**

We will provide services based upon sound evidence of need and in a way that is proportionate to the needs of our communities. A 'Planning and Needs' assessment has been undertaken providing us with not just demographic information but a wide range of information including such matters as broadband coverage.

Also, in developing the proposals for buildings based library services, consulted on between June and August 2016 we have used evidence based service planning material such as the 2015 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation as well as other considerations such as:

- Accessibility of buildings in terms of location
- Financial efficiency of buildings

- The practicalities of vacating buildings including those where we may already be in discussions about vacating such as where rental agreements are due to expire
- Use of larger premises to deliver multiple services
- Looking at which buildings are more suited to flexible delivery of different services
- Local feedback from communities, councillors and partners such as district councils or health authorities

The Planning and Needs Assessment that has informed the proposals for the future model of library service provision, including buildings based library services, and has been based on the following factors:

- The population of Lancashire including age profiles, ethnicity, gender and disability
- Information about neighbourhoods such as population density, community cohesion, social isolation and digital accessibility
- Gaps in outcomes based on the index of multiple deprivation and educational attainment
- The County Council's draft Corporate Strategy and financial position
- Information about service users and consultation feedback

We have also considered a comprehensive and ongoing equality impact assessment, accessibility to library buildings and mobile library services and taken account of feedback and ongoing dialogue with stakeholders including elected members, partners and service users.

Having considered the broad needs of Lancashire's population, feedback from the Library Service and Property Strategy consultations, and in the context of the financial challenges facing the Council, it is proposed that we will deliver a fully staffed and resourced library service from 39 neighbourhood centres. The neighbourhood centres will be our public facing buildings and in many instances a number of County Council services will be co-located in one place. In addition to this we will also deliver:

- An additional 5 satellite\* services from neighbourhood centres
- A comprehensive mobile library service providing access for people living in more rural areas of Lancashire
- A home library service to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in Lancashire who are unable to access a library building (currently delivering to over 1,000 customers)
- A virtual library service, building on our investment in broadband infrastructure and skills development, consisting of e-books, e-audiobooks and online reference and enquiry service
- A schools and prisons library service across the county.

\*a satellite library service is an unstaffed library facility within a shared County Council building with other services being delivered from the same building.

The service will have book stock and self-service technology as well as computer provision and customers will be able to request items in the same way that they can at other libraries. A member of library staff will attend the library each week for a limited time to meet with customers, check that the book stock and other equipment is in order and deal with any other issues which may have arisen in the past week.

### **Our customers and core offer**

Our libraries will offer:

- Safe and welcoming spaces
- Advice and guidance from knowledgeable and trained staff on a range of subjects from recommending reading materials to help getting online and signposting to local services.
- Creative and neutral spaces
- Free access to the internet
- Free 24/7 access to services
- Support for children and families, through actively promoting health, learning and wellbeing initiatives.
- A range of books, digital resources, eBooks and other materials.
- Cultural activities and events
- Free Wi-Fi

Our Home Library Service will:

- Offer full access to the whole of the library services books and audio visual material.
- Provide a request service
- Be provided free of charge if you are unable to get to a library building because of your age, disability or ill health.

Our Mobile Library Service will provide:

- A service which serves Lancashire's more isolated communities
- Full access to the whole of the library service collections including stock suitable for all ages.
- A request service
- Fully accessible vehicles

Our satellite libraries will offer:

- Book stock and self-service technology
- Public network (PNET) computers.
- A library staff member on hand each week for a limited time to meet with customers, check that the book stock and other equipment is in order and deal with any other issues which may have arisen in the past week.

## Universal Offers

Lancashire library staff are committed to and trained to deliver the universal offers set out by the Society of Chief Librarians and partners including The Arts Council and the Reading Agency in order to keep our services relevant and accessible. Together these three organisations have identified five key areas of service which today's users regard as integral to public libraries and developed a shared strategy for the future.

The Universal Offers cover the five key areas of service which our customers and our stakeholders see as essential to a 21<sup>st</sup> century library service.

They are:

- Reading Offer: Providing a modern reading service within a local community
- Information Offer: Supporting people to access information and services online in life-critical areas
- Digital Offer: Providing free internet access, clear and accessible online information about library services and staff who are trained to help customers access digital information
- Health Offer: Providing and promoting Public health information, sign posting and referrals as well as creative and social reading activity
- Learning Offer: Developing and promoting our role and contribution to lifelong-learning

This strategy has been developed to build on the success of the past, and to enable the service to respond to the future challenges and opportunities facing the people of Lancashire.

## Looking to the future

Public libraries across the country have been placed in the spotlight as councils deal with significant financial constraints. Although we recognise that we will have to live within our means we still have a service which we can be proud of with staff who are passionate about delivering the very best they can for our customers.

Within the resources we have available we will continue to provide a variety of options to access library resources through physical spaces, mobile libraries, digital services, the School Library Service, Home Library Service and Prison service.

Our creative and collaborative approach and our continued commitment to invest in a wide range of library services will allow us to maximise our extensive network of libraries and customer contacts. We will continue to be a key part of the County Council's offer to citizens in Lancashire and will use the opportunity to influence the design of neighbourhood centres and develop closer links with partners and colleagues from other services. In this way we will improve the customer experience through innovative and joined up ways of working which can open our libraries up to whole new audiences.



## Appendix 1

## Library service outcomes

The priorities which the library service has identified are guided by the vision and values outlined in Lancashire's draft Corporate Strategy below:

- *A child born in Lancashire today has the potential to live for over 100 years. Whilst our strategy looks up to twenty years ahead, every year we will have citizens aged from 0 to over 100. We will work for all of them to do all we can within our resources to achieve our vision.*
- *To be fair, trustworthy, ambitious and have belief in people.*

The Library service will, in promoting these as well as its own vision and values, work towards meeting the needs of all the people who live and work in Lancashire including the most vulnerable members of our society. We will recognise and celebrate the wide range of cultures which make Lancashire such a unique, vibrant and diverse county.

The way in which the service will meet its objectives and how these link in with the overall objectives of the Council, and the universal offers set out by the Society of Chief Librarians, are detailed as follows:

## To Live a Healthy life

- Promoting the love of reading among the community
- Libraries meeting the needs and wellbeing of our communities

<b>Strategic Outcome – Corporate</b>	<b>Lancashire Libraries Vision</b>	<b>Strategic Outcome – Libraries</b>	<b>Action; Lancashire Libraries will:-</b>
To Live a Healthy life	Promoting a love of reading among the community  Delivering against the Society of Chief Librarians reading, learning & health offers	To enable the people of Lancashire to enjoy reading for pleasure and improve their life chances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a lifelong reading journey</li> <li>• Provide an excellent range of quality books, digital resources, eBooks and other materials</li> <li>• Provide library activities to improve literacy</li> <li>• Develop a love of reading to benefit health and well being</li> <li>• Provide reading</li> </ul>

			friends
To Live a Healthy Life	Libraries meeting the needs and wellbeing of our communities  Delivering against the Society of Chief Librarians health and information offers	Supporting our communities to be self-reliant and to stay well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be a place for the community to come together</li> <li>• Be the link between technology and information to help people keep well</li> <li>• Promote awareness and access to online health and well-being information</li> <li>• Support people to create a healthier, happier and more knowledgeable community</li> </ul>

To live in a decent home in a good environment:-

- Libraries serving your needs 24/7
- Libraries as cultural and learning venues
- Ensuring a highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce

<b>Strategic Outcome – Corporate</b>	<b>Lancashire Libraries Vision</b>	<b>Strategic Outcome – Libraries</b>	<b>Action; Lancashire Libraries will:-</b>
To live in a decent home in a good environment	Libraries serving your needs 24/7  Delivering against the Society of Chief Librarians digital learning and information offers	Provide an easy to use physical and virtual service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable our communities to engage with the digital world</li> <li>• Provide easy access to validated and trusted information</li> <li>• Provide access to a consistently high quality service 24/7</li> </ul>
To live in a decent home in a good environment	Libraries as cultural and learning venues  Delivering	Provide flexible spaces to enjoy and explore culture and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to enjoy and explore cultural activities and</li> </ul>

	against the Society of Chief Librarians learning offer		<p>events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide flexible, bookable spaces for our communities</li> <li>• Offer a wealth of learning opportunities</li> </ul>
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To have employment that provides an income that allows full participation in society

- Ensuring a highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce
- Driving economic change through re-skilling, learning and digital literacy
  - Libraries working with volunteers

<b>Strategic Outcome – Corporate</b>	<b>Lancashire Libraries Vision</b>	<b>Strategic Outcome – Libraries</b>	<b>Action; Lancashire Libraries will:-</b>
To have employment that provides an income that allows full participation in society	<p>Ensuring a highly skilled, motivated and flexible workforce</p> <p>Delivering against all of the Society of Chief Librarians Universal offers</p>	Well trained, friendly staff, able to help people find what they want either independently or with support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide learning and development opportunities</li> <li>• Hold recognition events to celebrate achievements</li> <li>• Provide staff with opportunities to voice their opinions</li> <li>• Keep staff well informed and supported</li> <li>• Develop a flexible and inclusive culture that attracts and retains the people with the right skills and attitudes.</li> </ul>



<p>To have employment that provides an income that allows full participation in society</p>	<p>Driving economic change through re-skilling, learning and digital literacy</p> <p>Delivering against the Society of Chief Librarians digital and information offers</p>	<p>To enable the people of Lancashire to fulfil their aspirations and live independent lives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to enhance their skills through digital literacy and learning programmes</li> <li>• Work with partners to deliver and signpost to learning opportunities</li> <li>• Provide free access to digital resources to enable people to improve and increase employability skills</li> </ul>
<p>To have employment that provides an income that allows full participation in society</p>	<p>Libraries working with volunteers</p> <p>Delivering against the Society of Chief Librarians learning and health offers</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for volunteers to use their skills and knowledge to extend our offer and support their own wellbeing and employability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an effective recruitment process</li> <li>• Provide a range of opportunities for volunteers to contribute to their communities</li> <li>• Offer training and personal development</li> <li>• Provide recognition</li> </ul>