



CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION

Department of Community and Children's Services

Barbican & Community LIBRARIES

Library Strategy 2021 - 2023

Foreword from the Chairmen of the Culture Heritage and Libraries and Community and Children’s Services Committees

Welcome to the Barbican and Community Libraries Strategy. This document aims to transform your view of what a modern, vibrant library service can achieve and in doing so, we hope to destroy a few myths and challenge stereotypes.

Our lending library service is agile and proactive. It is constantly evolving and developing to anticipate and meet the needs of all our service users, current and potential. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our library staff provided customers of all ages with a range of new and imaginative digital services alongside COVID-safe physical services, many of which were described as “a lifeline” by our customers.

We are immensely proud of our three lending libraries which offer all our City of London communities new and innovative services alongside all the much-loved traditional ones.

Wendy Hyde
Chairman of Culture
Heritage and Libraries committee



Ruby Sayed
Chairman of
Community and Children’s
Services committee





Barbican & Community Libraries is the service name for the City's three lending libraries. These are:

Barbican Library

Situated on level 2 of the Barbican Centre, this is a major London library and the City's largest public library. It has a separate children's library and contains one of the UK's biggest and best used public music libraries.

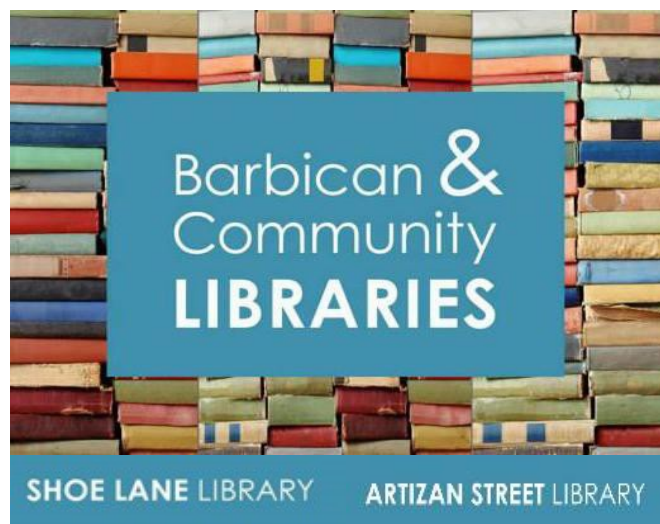
Shoe Lane Library

Shoe Lane Library is a popular and well-used library, housed in the Deloitte building in the heart of the business City.

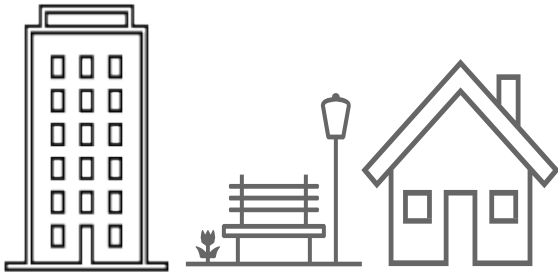
Artizan Street Library and Community Centre

This is the City's newest library, located in the east of the City. It has four hireable rooms and the staff provide a public library, a community centre and frontline housing services to the local community.

This strategy sets out the City of London Corporation's (City Corporation) vision, approach and commitment to the provision of its lending libraries.



Our Customers



The City has a small residential population of 7700 ^[1]

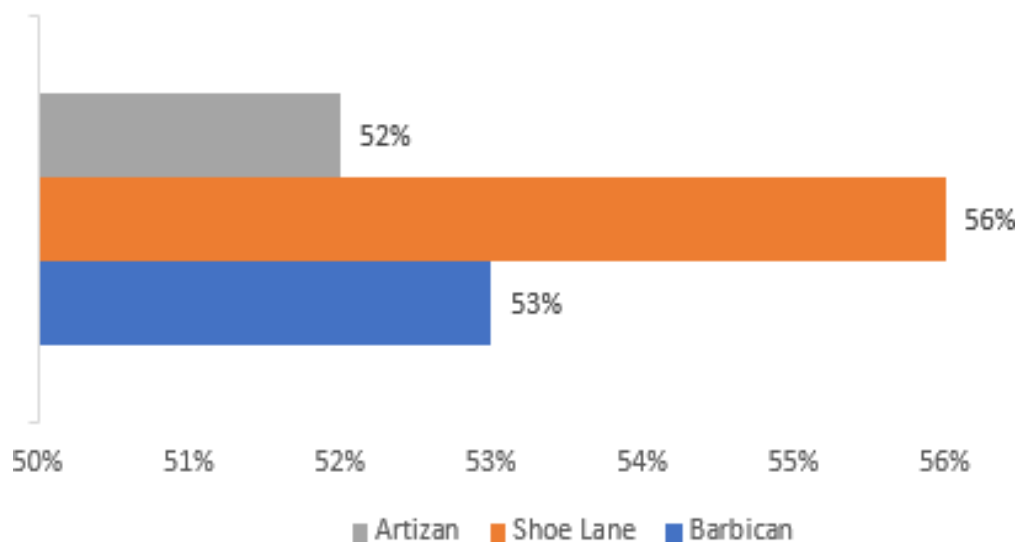


Most of our c23000 library members are aged between 25 -64

We also serve residents from fringe boroughs, students and visitors to the City



Slightly more men than women are members of our libraries



^[1]<https://www.london.gov.uk/in-my-area/city-london>

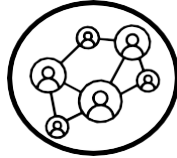
Our Vision



To help individuals and communities to live their best lives by supporting:



Reading and Literacy



Social Mobility



Culture & Creativity



Health and wellbeing



Equality and Diversity



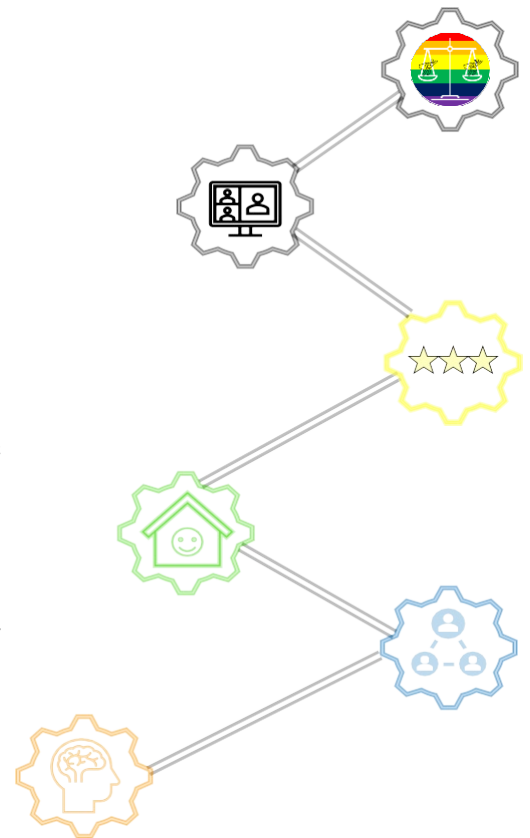
Social Interaction

Our Principles



We aim to provide:

- A library service that inspires and delights all our customers
- A service that delivers the aims of the City of London Corporation and the business objectives of the Department of Community and Children's Services
- A service that celebrates diversity and promotes equality
- A service that actively works with partners to provide enhanced services for all our customers
- A sustainable, efficient, responsive and relevant public library service that provides value for money, enhances lives and actively engages with all our customers regardless of age, race, gender, or physical and mental ability.
- Services that are co-produced with customers wherever possible.
- Library buildings that are safe, neutral and welcoming to all.
- A full enquiries service carried out by expert, fully trained staff.
- The very best stock, customer services, activities and events.
- Technology that enhances the effective delivery of our services.



What we do



People tell us they use our libraries for many different reasons including:

Borrowing books, CDs and DVDs

Including downloading/streaming from our extensive digital offer



Supporting formal education and informal lifelong learning

Library talks, events, exhibitions and activities are provided for people of all ages and interests alongside comprehensive book stock. Our extensive services include free use of library computers providing access to the Internet, IT assistance and training and much more.



Supporting their own Health and Wellbeing

Including smoking cessation, weight management, health checks and Dragon Café in the City; a partnership with Business Healthy and Mental Fight Club that provides innovative and diverse wellbeing activities to residents and City Workers



Combatting loneliness (social inclusion)

Public libraries provide a shared space where people feel they belong, are comfortable visiting on their own and can access help at their own pace. In 2017, the City of London Corporation published a report, "Improving Social Wellbeing in the City of London"^[2] in which a *Libraries First* approach to social inclusion was formally adopted.



Access to culture and recreation to achieve a healthy work/life balance

Our offer also includes a Music Library with expert staff, music scores and CDs for loan, listening booths, practice pianos, services to local choirs and orchestras and high-profile exhibitions. It has received four "Excellence" awards from the International Association of Music Librarians and Archivists. All our libraries have reading groups and all offer a programme of talks, activities and events.



Our services for children, young people and families are heavily used and highly valued and all our libraries offer a wide range of children's centre services.



Our highly trained staff provide a full information and enquiries service at all locations.



[2] <https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Services-DCCS/social-wellbeing-report.pdf>



1. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75> (amended by the Local Government Act 1972) provides the statutory framework for local authorities to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” public library service including the free loan of books to those who live, work or study within the area. Government responsibility for public libraries sits with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Arts Council England is the development agency for libraries in England but has no budgetary responsibilities for them.

2. Independent Library Report for England 2014,

This research was carried out by Sir William Sieghart on behalf of DCMS. Sieghart said:

“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.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388989/Independent_Library_Report-18_December.pdf

3. National Priorities

Libraries Connected (formerly The Society of Chief Librarians) has redefined the modern British public library service through four Universal Library Offers which demonstrate the power of libraries to enrich the lives of individuals and their communities. These offers are Books and Reading, Culture and Creativity, Digital & Information, Health and Wellbeing. The offers are underpinned by the Children’s Promise and Six Steps: the goal of The Children’s Promise is that every child and young person in libraries is inspired to read for pleasure, has access to a diverse range of materials, can engage in a variety of digital activities and can take part in activities that improve their well-being. Six Steps is the commitment to the c.two million blind and partially sighted people in the UK who, like everyone else, need library and information services to support their daily life.

4. Wider Social Outcomes

Our libraries actively work to address wider social outcomes including:

1. Social inclusion, reducing loneliness and building communities
2. Improving people’s health and wellbeing.
3. Improving social mobility, literacy/digital literacy and equal opportunities for all.
4. Promoting equality and diversity

We do this by providing individuals and communities with access to world-class libraries that are:

- Well-stocked
- Well-equipped
- Fit for the future
- Appropriately staffed.

Public libraries have always been street corner universities supporting formal and informal lifelong learning and our libraries are constantly expanding the offer. In addition to books and DVDs on a wide variety of subjects, our libraries offer free WiFi; free access to the Internet and a range of Microsoft Office products to assist with job searching and job applications; self-help and ESOL collections; English conversation classes; CV workshops and digital training opportunities.

5. Local Priorities

The City of London Corporation’s Corporate Plan (2018-2023) sets out three aims and twelve outcomes that inform all work carried out by City of London Departments.

With our emphasis on supporting personal empowerment and our libraries being active community hubs, most of the work carried out by Barbican and Community Libraries is relevant to the aim **Contribute to a flourishing society**. However, our libraries also contribute to the achievement of all three aims and many of the twelve outcomes.

Aim	Outcome	Barbican and Community Libraries’ contribution
Contribute to a flourishing society	People are safe and feel safe.	Our libraries provide safe, neutral community space for people to browse, socialise, study, search for work or just be. Staff working with children and vulnerable adults are regularly DBS checked.
Contribute to a flourishing society	People enjoy good health and wellbeing.	Our libraries offer a wide range of items and health and wellbeing-themed collections for loan and/or download. All our libraries provide a varied programme of events and activities to support the health and wellbeing of people of all ages.
Contribute to a flourishing society	People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.	Our libraries support formal and informal lifelong learning via a wide range of items for loan including dedicated self-help collections. Our libraries offer opportunities to learn new things and new skills via a programme of activities for all ages. Our libraries support social mobility with a wide range of books, events and access to the Internet.

Contribute to a flourishing society	People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.	Our libraries support digital inclusion by providing computers for public use, free of charge, and access to the Internet. All libraries provide support and training for people with low/no digital skills.
Contribute to a flourishing society	Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.	Our libraries and community centres are friendly, welcoming spaces with trained staff, and are well equipped for the needs of all our communities. We carry out an in-depth consultation with our customers every three years and act on the results. We evaluate services and events for satisfaction and impact and make changes as required. We collect informal as well as formal comments and use these to shape our services. Wherever possible, we seek to co-produce services.
Shape outstanding environments	Businesses are trusted and socially and Environmentally responsible	We provide a range of volunteering opportunities for City workers including literacy support, coding tuition and supporting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) education activities
Shape outstanding environments	We are a global hub for innovation in finance and professional services, commerce and culture.	Our libraries provide access to the world's best literature, art and music via a comprehensive stock of fiction and non-fiction books, CDs, DVDs and music and video streaming services. Barbican Library hosts the library of the Society of Technical Analysts. Barbican Library has two major art exhibition programmes. Our Music Library has received four Excellence Awards from the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres
Shape outstanding environments	We have access to the skills and talent we need.	We employ talented, skilled and appropriately qualified staff.
Support a thriving economy	We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive.	We provide free Wi-Fi in all libraries along with public computers, free access to the Internet and a range of Microsoft products .

<p>Support a thriving economy</p>	<p>We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive.</p>	<p>Library members can access their accounts remotely, 24/7, reserve items and renew loans. They can also download eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eComics, access a range of online digital resources and stream music and video anywhere and at any time.</p> <p>Our libraries are an active part of the wider <i>London Libraries</i> network and the nationwide <i>Libraries Connected</i> network.</p>
<p>Support a thriving economy</p>	<p>We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.</p>	<p>in Barbican Library, we have two regular exhibition programmes. Our foyer exhibitions feature the work of amateur and semi-professional artists, individuals and collectives, via a variety of art forms. Our Music Library has received four Excellence Awards from the International Association of Music Libraries, Archives and Documentation Centres, most recently for its high-profile exhibitions which are regularly featured in national media.</p> <p>Our Dragon Café in the City project is produced in collaboration with Mental Fight Club and Business Healthy</p>



Challenges	Solutions
Financial challenges	<p>We will constantly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate ways of doing things differently • operate as part of a consortium wherever possible • address alternative methods of service delivery • seek out alternative ways of generating income
IT. We have a complex network that sometimes does not deliver .	We will continue to work closely with corporate IT and commissioned providers to find appropriate solutions.
A lack of specialist skills in marketing, business planning and performance management	We will restructure to ensure skill gaps are filled. Wherever possible, we will think corporately and access assistance from elsewhere in the Department of Community and Children’s Services and other departments in the City of London.
Shrinking staff capacity Lack of planning time contributing to a fear of being overwhelmed	<p>We will make good use of the Corporate plan to be clear about our priorities and these will be reflected in our team plans and individual staff objectives.</p> <p>We will make good use of time management tools and skills.</p> <p>We will share skills across Barbican & Community Libraries to avoid duplication and increase efficiency.</p> <p>We will ensure parity and equality in working practices across all 3 sites</p> <p>We will continue to invest in skilful line management</p> <p>We will continue to make good use of volunteers to support staff and provide additional services.</p>
Silo working	We will ensure better sharing of skills/work across Barbican & Community Libraries and better adherence to our own policies and procedures
When we try to be all things to all people, we are in danger of forgetting the core service	We will develop a better portfolio approach to services which will be reflected in our business plan and team plans.
The inaccurate stereotype of libraries and librarians is damaging and negative. Consequently, many people do not understand what a vibrant, modern library service can offer and believe our services are not for them	<p>We will concentrate on better marketing of our services, using segmentation as appropriate.</p> <p>We will ask for advice from experts within the Department and the wider City Corporation.</p> <p>Staff at all levels will take every opportunity to act as advocates for our services.</p> <p>We will provide tours/service presentations for Members and officers</p>

Hard to reach communities – people not engaging	We will address hard to reach groups through business planning and SMART team plan objectives
Persuading more residents to use the services	<p>We will ensure that our services are relevant to the needs of our residents</p> <p>We will concentrate on better marketing of services to residents.</p> <p>We will seek out every opportunity to coproduce services with residents</p> <p>We will make best use of resident groups wherever possible</p>
Constantly changing customer needs and expectations	<p>We will continue to work to stay relevant and responsive to customer needs.</p> <p>We will make good use of professional skills and survey/evaluation data to address changing needs.</p> <p>We will continue to collect formal and informal comments and act upon them.</p> <p>We will tell customers how we have responded to their comments/requests, making good use of all communication channels including social media.</p>
There is a national decline in traditional library services borne out by a fall in adult loans. We need to work to reverse these trends	<p>We will continue to ensure all libraries have a varied and interesting reader development programme which is detailed in their business plans.</p> <p>We will continue to invest in reader development staff training.</p> <p>We will continue to work with other UK public libraries, regionally and nationally, to promote reading for pleasure.</p>

Appendix 1

Further reading

Relevant research

There are three notable pieces of research which have informed the current direction for British public Libraries:

1. Envisioning the Library of the Future

This research was commissioned by The Arts Council and conducted by Ipsos MORI and Shared Intelligence in 2012 – 13. The seven key findings can be summarised as follows:

1. There is still a stated need for public libraries
2. The core purpose of libraries is to enable people to access, explore and enjoy reading and knowledge
3. The services we provide must be relevant to the communities we serve
4. Success depends on community engagement, enablement and co-production
5. Libraries have to secure other funding streams
6. There are leadership challenges and general staff upskilling is needed
7. Communication and knowledge sharing needs to improve

https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Envisioning_the_library_of_the_future_phases_1_and_2_full_report.pdf

2. Independent Library Report for England

This research was carried out by William Sieghart on behalf of DCMS in 2014. The report supports the findings of the Envisioning report and makes three recommendations:

1. The provision of a national digital resource for libraries, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities
2. The setting up of a task and finish force, led by local government, in partnership with other bodies involved in the library sector, to provide a strategic framework for England, and to help in implementing the following
3. The task force, to work with local authorities, to help them improve, revitalise and if necessary, change their local library service, while encouraging, appropriate to each library, increased community involvement

Sieghart said:

“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.”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388989/Independent_Library_Report-18_December.pdf

3. Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021

This report was written by the Libraries Taskforce, a group established within DCMS as a direct outcome of the Independent Library Report for England.

It outlined a vision for public libraries as vital community hubs - bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better lives. The ambition described is for everyone to:

- choose to use libraries, because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so
- understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what's available to them
- be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information they need to improve their quality of life
- receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world

It also listed 7 Outcomes that are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas and to which library services make strong contributions. These are:

1. Cultural and creative enrichment
2. Increased reading and literacy
3. Improved digital access and literacy
4. Helping everyone achieve their full potential
5. Healthier and happier lives
6. Greater prosperity
7. Stronger, more resilient communities

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>