



**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

# **A Strategy for Nottinghamshire's Libraries**



# Forward

This strategy for Nottinghamshire’s libraries outlines our promises as a public library authority, the priorities we will focus on, and the outcomes we aim to deliver for Nottinghamshire and its people.

The strategy builds on the past success of our library service, and is ambitious in the outcomes we aim to achieve for the future.

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 modernised excellent library service for Nottinghamshire.

The strategy considers the proven outcomes 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 overall County Council strategic plan - ensuring we make the most of our potential to deliver a real and measurable contribution to the quality of life of Nottinghamshire communities.

The strategy and action plan demonstrates a commitment to the continuing delivery and development of a strong public library service in Nottinghamshire.

**Cllr. John Cottee**  
**Cabinet Member Culture and Community**

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# Background

## Nottinghamshire's One Council Strategic Plan 2010 - 2014

### The vision

"Our vision is for Nottinghamshire to be a place where people enjoy life, are healthy, safe and prosperous; and where business is able to thrive. We are proud of our past and ambitious for our future."

### The promises and priorities

"We want Nottinghamshire to be a county where people have high aspirations; live as independently as possible and are empowered to have greater responsibility."

### Children, Families and Cultural Services department ambition

"We want Nottinghamshire to be a place where children are safe and happy, where everyone enjoys a good quality of life, and where everyone can achieve their potential."

## Nottinghamshire Libraries: Supporting the delivery of the strategic plan

The County Council's strategic plan states that at the end of 2014, the Council will have:

- ensured that our key strategies and policies are fully aligned to our key priorities
- delivered improved cultural services.

This strategy details how this key cultural service will contribute to the delivery of Nottinghamshire's vision.

“ I was thrilled to see how many families were using the new library and what great events you have planned. Lots of people we know are talking about what a real gem it is for the area – no dusty old whispering places in sight, the staff are excellent, and it's such a contemporary building which makes people think their town is a bit more 'cool' than it used to be. Buildings such as this really raise aspirations. ”

- A Worksop Library Customer

• Young people enjoying live music at their Library



# Our promise to the people of Nottinghamshire

**Nottinghamshire's Libraries, Archives and Information service aims to:**

Be at the heart of Nottinghamshire communities and community life.

To achieve this, we will:

**Inspire** the enjoyment of books and reading

**Create** knowledge through access to learning, information and local heritage.

**Stimulate** and encourage cultural activities

**Offer** excellent and inclusive customer service for all every time

• *The annual Southwell Library Poetry Festival*



## Proud of our past, ambitious for our future

The County Council has a duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service. 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 Nottinghamshire library service remains effective, innovative and fit for purpose.

The main national developments that will influence the future of the Service include:

- developments in relation to the 1964 Museums and Library Act; mainly the Wirral Enquiry 2009 and the Future Libraries programme 2011.
- the development of a new national framework for libraries by the Arts Council England - the national strategic body for libraries.

Nottinghamshire has enjoyed a national reputation for excellent and innovative library and archive services since both the County Library service was created in 1974 and the County Archives Service was established in 1949.

Delivering innovative and dynamic solutions in response to emerging needs within our local communities and wider society has

always been central to the success of the Nottinghamshire service. From leading the County Council's exploitation of technology and designing innovative new library buildings, to pioneering book gifting for babies, developing reading groups for people with visual impairment, and working with volunteers, Nottinghamshire's Library Service has a long track record which the county can be proud of.



- *Our libraries play an important role developing children's literacy skills*

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 Nottinghamshire and its people.

Public libraries across the country have been placed in the spot light as councils deal with significant financial constraints. Our approach is to ensure our valued public libraries remain open, accessible and are at the centre of service delivery in the coming years.

Our approach and investment in the coming years will allow us to maximise our extensive network of libraries and customer contacts as a key face to face service, becoming the 'front door' of the County Council and other services all within easy reach of all Nottinghamshire citizens.



- *Our libraries provide the space, technology and resources to work*

## Our customers

Nottinghamshire's libraries play an important role in the lives of individuals and communities. With more than 80,000 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 370,000 information enquiries are answered, 4 million items are loaned, 7000 cultural, learning, reading and community events are delivered, and some 1 million online interactions take place.

The service is also connected to many organisations, both big and small, and in many ways - from providing meeting rooms to being commissioned to deliver specific services.

A full listing of current active partnerships can be found in the Background and Insights section of this plan. The attraction of working with libraries for many organisations lies in their wide local reach, the neutrality and trust people place in the service, and the sheer quantity of face-to-face contacts libraries enjoy with the whole community.

The profile of our customers across the county closely matches the profile of Nottinghamshire's population. A detailed breakdown can be found in the Background and Insights section.

More than 50% of all Nottinghamshire residents hold a library card, and in the majority of library catchment areas around 28% of the population use their local library on a regular basis – rising to more than 60% in some areas.

## Our core offer

Libraries are divided into four tiers of service provision based on their levels of use, location of the library building and the population served, to deliver the right core offer for their communities.

These levels set out the core offer available to our customers at each library.

### Level 1

#### **Major 120,000 + visits per year**

Our major libraries will provide at least six day opening, and give access to a wide range of resources, facilities and activities. The core offer of our major libraries will ensure a good range of resources, a local studies area, café, meeting rooms for hire, art exhibitions, wi fi access, and regular, inspiring programmes of activities and events to engage people with reading, learning, heritage and culture.

### Level 2

#### **Medium 35,000 + visits per year**

These libraries will provide a minimum four day opening with a good range of resources and regular activities for children.

### Level 3

#### **Community Partnership Libraries fewer than 35,000 visits per year**

Our Community Partnership Libraries will provide a minimum of two day opening and a core range of resources and services. They will also continue to develop community partnerships to enhance the core service.

### Level 4

#### **Mobile libraries**

Our mobile libraries will focus on providing a library service to customers with limited mobility - mainly the elderly and those with restricted access to a static library.

## Our ten key pledges

1. We will **invest** to putting the library service at the heart of the community, maximising the use of libraries as the key face to face service of the County Council.
2. We will provide **services where people live**, through an extensive network of libraries and specialist mobile libraries.



• Local young people met the Poet Laureate thanks to our libraries

3. We will **respond to local needs** when developing our service, ensuring that:
  - libraries are open at convenient times
  - a wide range of resources are available across the library network
  - we consult when making changes to service provision, such as opening hours.
4. We will **increase community involvement** in delivering library services.

5. We will keep **local communities and customers at the centre of what we do**.
6. We will be **modern, innovative** and share best practice.
7. We will provide **good customer service** every time and maintain our high satisfaction levels.
8. We will work to deliver **positive social, economic and educational outcomes** through our libraries for individuals, communities, local business and culture across Nottinghamshire.
9. We will continue to **develop new audiences** for our library service by identifying potential new customers.
10. We will continue to **explore new operating models** to provide the best library service for Nottinghamshire.



• Libraries provide resources to support citizenship

## Investment and efficiency

We have a statutory duty as a library service to be 'comprehensive and efficient.' We will work to maximise our resources, buildings and staffing to ensure we achieve value for money. In 2011, a new income generation strategy was adopted by the service, which focuses on both maintaining current income sources, and also identifies new areas of potential income aligned to the core role of the service.

The implementation of the remodelling of library services in April 2011 aimed to maintain the provision of library services in 60 locations across the county, while saving 25% of all costs - amounting to a £3.3M saving by 2013/14.

Bookfund investment is an important factor in our ability to provide the range of resources in the core service offer, and will continue to be a key priority for the service.



- *Our library staff provide the Council's highest number of face-to-face interactions with local people*

Capital investment in library buildings and ICT has been maintained over many years. An outline of programmed and potential capital projects is included in our action plan.

- *Our library staff are key to our success*



Since 2005 the service has made significant efficiencies while still providing a network of 60 libraries. For example the number of staff employed in 2005 was 365.8, and in 2011 this total has reduced to 196.5 - a 46% reduction, with a 63% reduction in qualified librarian posts. At the same time, the service has ensured that active borrowers and physical visits have remained constant, while book issues have declined at a much lower rate than the national average.

### Outcomes – benefits and impact

By its very nature, the service provides a number of significant educational, cultural, social and economic outcomes. From the provision of a safe, warm and comfortable public space for community life to flourish, to the engagement with babies as they hold their first book, it's proven that libraries can have a positive impact for everyone. Many real examples of the impact libraries have are outlined in the Background and Insights section of this plan.

## What people say

"I'm 17 years old and I think my new library is amazing. It's like my whole life in one place!"

*A member of the Worksop young people's headspace project*

"My daughter is very motivated to read by the Summer Reading Challenge."

*A mother from Sutton-in-Ashfield*

"The Work Club sessions in the library have been really useful in our job searches, helping to keep morale up, ..."

*A member of the Worksop Library Job Club*

"Without the use of computers I could not have completed two courses this year..."

*A learner from Retford*

"I'm a Community Learning Champion for my local library and the Adult and Community Learning Service, and I can honestly say it is one of the best things I have ever done in my career."

*A volunteer from Cotgrave*

"The local history exhibition in the library provoked much lively discussion and was quickly picked up by the local media..."

*A local historian from Kimberley*

"What a fantastic community building, this is what libraries are for."

*A new dad using the library for the first time*

"The mobile library plays an enormous part in rural village life for people of all ages. Thank you!"

*A parish councillor*

"Excellent service. It is essential that we have access to our past, and Nottinghamshire Libraries and Archives do an excellent job of providing it."

*A local historian and family history researcher*

"There is a strong customer focus within the new senior management appointments and this is reflected in the plans for service development."

*An external Charter Mark assessor*

"Having performed comedy all over the U.K and beyond for a decade I had never experienced (or indeed heard of) a comedy gig taking place in a library, but it works wonderfully in the new library".

*Comedian and event promoter on holding comedy events at Worksop Library*

"My visit to the library made me feel that public libraries are as vital to the well-being of the community they serve as they always were."

*A retired librarian visiting Retford Library*

### • Inspiring Family Fun Days



# Our priorities

## Our priorities: Reading and books, information, learning, local heritage and culture

Reading for pleasure has a key value in society. Research indicates that low literacy levels, low achievement and poverty are all linked. Reading for pleasure from an early age has a positive impact on functional literacy levels and has the ability to raise aspiration and create an informed individual.

Nottinghamshire's libraries are a success story. In a world where the increased range of leisure opportunities and the development of digital media have undermined a number of business models, the number of library users in Nottinghamshire has remained constant, and where we have invested in book stock, technology, and have refurbished and built new libraries, we have seen a significant increase in the uptake in-services.

The trends in library use and the increasing digital nature of society suggests that the resource of the service, its knowledge base, buildings, technology and programme, now need to reflect new and different requirements, beyond the traditional model of library services. The assets of the service need to be in line with cultural / retail visitor destinations and inspire through an increased offer of programmed reading, learning, arts and heritage activity, in order to provide increased opportunities to participate. Large multi-use, flexible and accessible library venues, such as the new Worksop, Mansfield and West Bridgford Libraries, result in an increase in both traditional library use and provide the basis for a range of programmed activities for new audiences to engage with in their locality.

- **Buildings for the future**

The County Council aims to both maintain an extensive network of libraries, and move to replicate the type of service the new Worksop building provides. Capital investment in level 1 libraries (those with 120,000 visitors +) is crucial. The action plan identifies potential projects for further investment.

- **Technology**

Through lottery funding and with the support of the Council's IT services, libraries have developed and maintained a network of public computers, providing free access to online services and the range of software provided by a standard personal computer. This initiative has provided a new audience for libraries, enabled us to respond to the drive to prevent digital exclusion, and allowed local and national public services deliver online services, without excluding those who can't afford home computing, or don't have the skills to get online.

Although this model and its rationale is still relevant - with still around 10 million adults in England never having been online - consideration needs to be given to how library and information services deliver services through technology and guarantee digital inclusion in the coming years.

- **Front door to County Council and community services**

The design of buildings and deployment of skilled and trained staff can enable public services to be commissioned and delivered through public libraries. The move to personalised budgets in adult social care, the focus on economic growth, and the need for agencies to deliver information and advice face-to-face in local communities, is increasing as organisations reduce their face-to-face presence. Libraries can be part of the solution for the County Council and other organisations.

A long list of active partnerships is listed in the Background and Insights section of the plan.

This demonstrates the wide range of activity delivered through library services and library buildings.

## Service offer

Libraries will develop and modernise their offer to the community and individuals by adopting increased:

- o exploitation of library spaces – learning from the museums, retail and arts sector.
- o programme development - cultural, learning and heritage activities, courses and events as a core element of service provision.
- o focus on local community information and advice services.
- o use of market and audience intelligence to target our service and programmes.

• *Fire and Rescue service engage with community through large scale events at the library*



# A 10 point action plan for the future

In order for the library service to maintain its contribution to the County Council's priorities, remain a success, and meet statutory duties, the following 10 point action plan has been developed.

Key Action	Key Outcomes
<p>1. Investing, developing and re-modelling the library network</p>	<p><b>Complete</b> the refurbishment of Mansfield Central Library.</p> <p><b>Open</b> a new West Bridgford Library in spring 2013.</p> <p><b>Progress</b> options for the extension of the life of the Nottinghamshire Archives office.</p> <p><b>Refurbish</b> and extend Bingham Library during 2013/14.</p> <p><b>Deliver</b> the funded phase 2 capital 15 library refurbishment programme from 2014/15.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> major improvement or replacement schemes for following strategic sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Beeston</li> <li>b) Newark</li> <li>c) Retford</li> </ul>
<p>2. Locate library services in the best location for the local community and library users</p>	<p><b>Complete</b> relocation of Annesley Woodhouse, Misterton and Tuxford Libraries.</p> <p><b>Progress</b> co-location opportunities with Children's centres.</p> <p><b>Seek</b> further opportunities for co-location of services.</p>
<p>3. Providing resources and access to services in partnership with local communities and customers</p>	<p><b>Provide</b> a comprehensive information service accessed through all channels.</p> <p><b>Signpost</b> and refer customers wanting to access County Council services.</p> <p><b>Be</b> the key face-to-face channel for County Council communications, consultations and campaigns.</p> <p><b>Support</b> customers using hard copy and digital resources.</p> <p><b>Host</b> information and advice services for local agencies.</p> <p><b>Provide</b> increased volunteering opportunities to enhance the core library service.</p>
<p>4. Continue developing the core offer to provide inspiration to read, create knowledge through access to information, learning, and the Nottinghamshire story, enhance community life and stimulate cultural activity</p>	<p><b>Maintain</b> user mystery customer surveys.</p> <p><b>Achieve</b> the Customer Excellence award.</p> <p><b>Ensure</b> our informal adult learning service fully exploits library venues.</p> <p><b>Ensure</b> the quality of library book stock is maintained, and that the selection is both relevant to the community and includes a wide range and depth of choice across the whole collection.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> the 18 main local studies collections to be as accessible as possible, while ensuring long term conservation and preservation of the resources.</p>

Key Action	Key Outcomes
5. Maximise use of new technology	<p><b>Deliver</b> full integration of e-books with core business systems.</p> <p><b>Maintain</b> 85% customer take-up for self service.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> our online catalogue and other online channels with the support of NCC IT and Digital Communication Services.</p> <p><b>Maintain</b> free access to online resources and the internet via both public computers and wifi.</p> <p><b>Innovate</b> to achieve improved customer services and efficiencies.</p>
6. Programmes - Arts, Heritage, Learning, Literature and Reading	<p><b>Develop</b> an ongoing managed events programme at Worksop, Mansfield and West Bridgford libraries.</p> <p><b>Further develop</b> new audiences at all level 1 libraries in line with community demand and available resources.</p> <p><b>Continue</b> to develop innovative approaches in reader services and development to fully exploit library collections.</p> <p><b>Provide</b> a planned programme of community learning, heritage and arts courses and events.</p>
7. Children and young people	<p><b>Ensure</b> libraries are child and young people safe and friendly.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> the core collections with consultation with children and young people.</p> <p><b>Provide</b> regular activities and events at level 1 libraries, and support the developments at all libraries in line with community demand and available resources.</p> <p><b>Exploit</b> national reading initiatives such as Bookstart and the Summer Reading Challenge to encourage reading for pleasure as a key intervention to improve literacy levels.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> good relationships between local libraries and their catchment schools, facilitating regular visits where possible.</p>
8. Staff development and empowerment	<p><b>Ensure</b> staff are well informed about the service offer.</p> <p><b>Empower</b> staff through developing their skills and knowledge.</p> <p><b>Build</b> on the strong customer focus of staff ensuring a friendly and professional approach to the whole community.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> roles and skills to enable staff to deliver the new service offer.</p>
9. Develop further community library partnership	<p><b>Continue</b> to build on the development of the Community Partnership Library (CPL) initiative to ensure the core library offer is enhanced, in order to have maximum impact for each community where the service is delivered.</p>
10. Develop mobile and community based library services to those who cannot visit a static library site.	<p><b>Review</b> the models of service delivery including mobile library vehicles, and the 'library at home service'.</p>

## How we will measure success

Our success will be measured against the following outcomes:

- We will have maintained a high level of access to the library service.
- We will have increased the range of services available in and community use of library buildings.
- We will have maintained the overall use of libraries across the Nottinghamshire, including (more than **3.5 million** loans), and (more than **5 million**) physical and virtual visits.
- We will have maintained the number of new books and other items added to stock.
- We will maintain our **100%** uptake rate of the Bookstart book gifting for babies scheme.
- We will have increased the number of library volunteers and increased the total number of hours volunteered.
- We will have recruited more than **20,000** new library members each year.
- We will have provided more than **200,000** computer and wi fi sessions.
- We will have achieved **95%** customer satisfaction rating.
- We will have generated income to enhance the library offer.
- We will have achieved the Customer Excellence Award for Libraries and Archives.
- We will support **8,000** children to take part in the annual Summer Reading Challenge.

• *Our libraries bring generations together*



## Summary

The Library Service will aim to meet the demands and aspirations of its current customers and continue to seek to engage with new users and audiences.

We will take a balanced approach in providing access to traditional and new digital resources, and in supporting customers with skilled staff at the right times, in the right locations, and in line with the core purpose of the service.

Our annual and one-off investment programmes are focussed on achieving maximum value for money and positive outcomes for Nottinghamshire and its people. The action plan sets an ambitious plan for our service - ensuring it remains at the heart of the community both today and in the future.

This plan both clearly highlights what our service does and will do, and aligns this to the key priorities of the County Council.

- *Our volunteer library IT Champions help us to support people to use new technology*



• Inspiring a new generation of library customers



• Our library service accessible for all



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