



# **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Libraries Review Needs Assessment Executive Summary**

Produced by:

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# 1 Executive Summary

The library service within Barnsley Council forms part of a broader customer services offer comprising of the contact centre, the web development team (including digital champions) and the service development team. From this cluster of services, a financial saving of £872k was proposed to be achieved by 2019/20 from which it was anticipated that £165k would be derived from the Libraries Review.

In recent years we have seen more people visiting libraries, but less books being borrowed. There is more demand for digital and online services, for internet access and for flexible opening hours. Due to the changing demands, advancing technology and reducing budgets it is really important that our library service evolves to meet these changing needs. In future we need to support a wide range of council strategies: Digital First; Barnsley Health and Care Together; Public Health Strategy and Jobs Plan and Customer Service Strategy to support our libraries to deliver 'Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'<sup>1</sup> and encourage a 'Libraries First' approach.

As part of the Barnsley Council libraries review a needs assessment has been produced to ensure that we create a more modern, dynamic and adaptable library service that better meets the needs of the community. Various information has been utilised including national guidance, examples of needs assessments and reviews from other authorities, the public inquiry into Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's (MBC) Library Service<sup>2</sup> and the letter in response to a local inquiry into library provision in Lancashire<sup>3</sup> in April 2017. The requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964<sup>4</sup> details that all authorities have a statutory responsibility to "*provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons*". Local authorities have a duty to allow free access for all who wish to use it, but their obligation to lend extends only to those who live, work or study full-time in their area.

It is essential that Barnsley Council must consider the performance, financial and the demographic needs of the area to ensure that we understand demands both now and in the future.

The work undertaken by the Libraries Taskforce<sup>5</sup> around casting a vision for what a modern library service will look like has been considered. They have a clear outline of where they want to go, and an action plan for how they are going to get there. They haven't yet set out the guidance of what a local needs assessment should cover in respect of Libraries, so the work undertaken by other Local Authorities who have recently produced such needs assessments has been used as a guide.

Overleaf is an infographic produced by the Libraries Taskforce, which summarises how libraries provide lifelong services, and what contribution they make to wider society.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

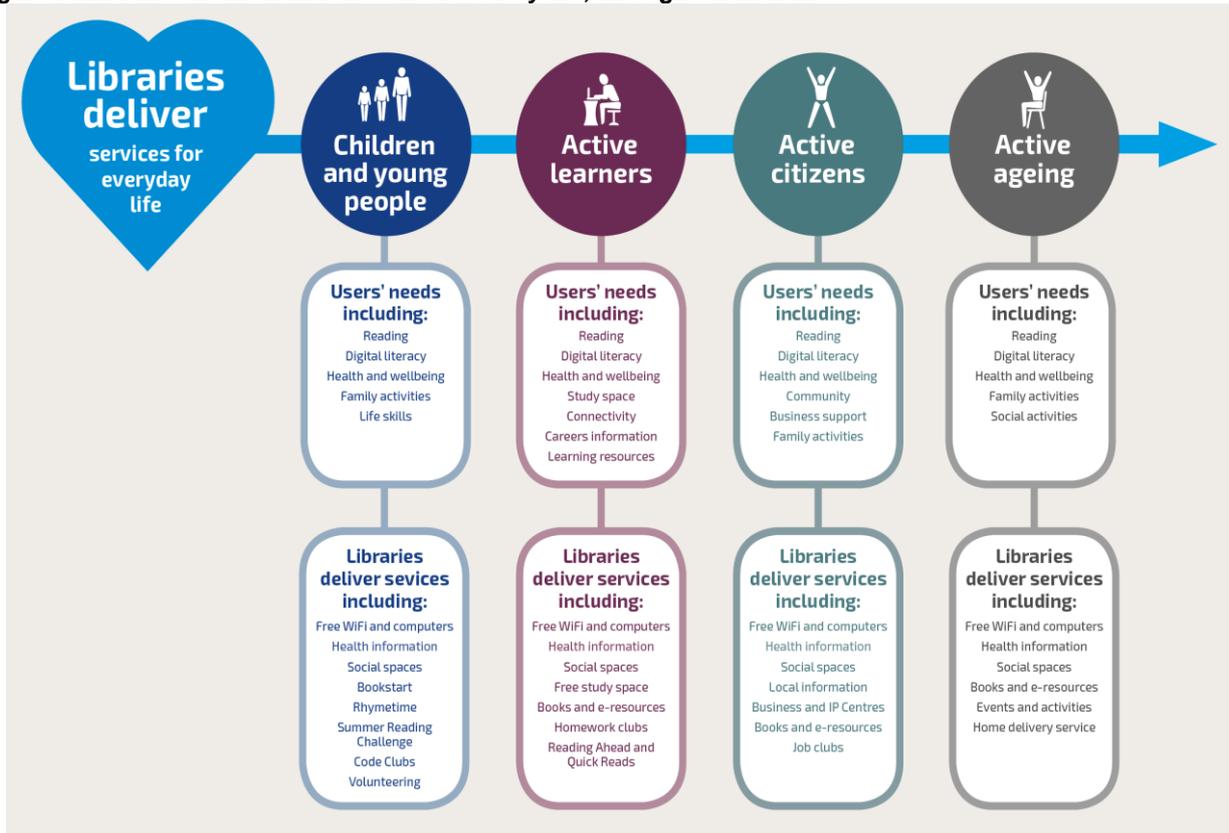
<sup>2</sup> [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407120701/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/publications/6485.aspx](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407120701/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6485.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-minister-for-civil-society-rob-wilson-stating-a-minded-to-decision-on-public-library-provision-in-lancashire>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75>

<sup>5</sup> The Taskforce's role is to enable the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Library Report for England and to build upon and add value to existing good practice, partnerships and other activities that are already supporting public libraries. It also promotes libraries to national and local government and to potential funders, and creates a strong and coherent narrative around the contribution public libraries make to society and to local communities. It reports to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

Figure 1: Libraries Deliver: Libraries are for everyone, throughout their lives



(Source: Libraries Task Force, Libraries Deliver Libraries are for everyone, throughout their lives (2018))

For each library we have defined a catchment area which is based on the closest Lower Super Output Area (LSOA)<sup>6</sup> to each library. There are 147 LSOAs in the borough. LSOAs allow for more detailed breakdowns of need and ensure that the needs of all the population are taken into account. The allocation of an LSOA to its closest library is based on the straight line distance between the library and the centre of the most densely populated area within an LSOA.

The resident population within Barnsley continues to rise and grow older. Such increases in population may not increase libraries usage, but we need to have the facilities available if required.

New housing developments will increase the number of residents and potential customers within Cudworth, Dearne, Royston, Penistone, Hoyland and Urban Barnsley. Urban Barnsley incorporates the main built up area of Barnsley extending from Athersley to Worsbrough (North to South), Higham to Ardsley (West to East) and includes Darton and Dodworth.

In recent years we have seen increased migration levels particularly from Romania and Poland and as a result, demand for books in other languages has increased. User data shows there has been an increase in demand from these people to use computers and access the internet.

*“Libraries also provide a valuable introduction into a community for newcomers, through assistance with specific needs (such as language training and citizenship support for recent immigrants where required) and, more generally, by using their knowledge to marshal a wealth of information on the local area, services and community. ... Libraries are recognised for leading and supporting activities that help to build understanding between different generations and cultures within the local community.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/censusgeography#super-output-area-soa>

Educational achievement across Barnsley is improving particular for those aged under 11 years. However, a large number of residents either have no qualifications or poor levels of achievement and recent literacy figures show that levels need to improve across much of the borough.

*“Libraries reach and support the whole community regardless of age, gender, socioeconomic status or educational attainment. ... The Warwick Commission<sup>7</sup> in 2015 highlighted the need to guarantee equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life, in the interest of business and wider society. ... Reading and literacy are two of the most fundamental skills in life ... libraries are a catalyst for improved reading and literacy skills.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force, 2018)

Barnsley residents have a high dependency on state benefits or receive low pay, therefore experience poverty and are unable to pay for luxuries (including the purchase of books, newspapers, access to the internet and IT equipment). The Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranked Barnsley as 39<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 354 local authorities (where 1 is most deprived). Data shows that deprivation varies across Barnsley, with pockets of high deprivation spread across the borough (more so in the East). 37% of Barnsley’s population are living within the 20% most deprived areas of England and the libraries task force has reported:

*“... libraries can play a big role helping everyone with opportunities they might not otherwise have access to. ... We want to see active membership growing for both children and adults, particularly in areas of deprivation.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force, 2018 referencing research by the Taking Part survey).

Demands for the usage of the internet and digital technology is growing nationally and will increase further in the years to come, particularly amongst those seeking employment and completing forms and applications. Demand may even rise for social purposes. Barnsley residents have a high level of digital exclusion, which means that many people still need support to do such tasks and lack the training or the finances to access digital technology. As those living in deprived areas may not be able to afford IT equipment or internet access, it is important that the council offers such facilities.

*“Public libraries provide a trusted network of accessible locations with free Wi-Fi, computers, and other technology. As the world becomes more digital, access to technology and the ability to operate confidently and safely online are ever more important..... Digital gives people the opportunity to access services more easily, to learn, and to interact with others. Digital skills also boost their employability, and the productivity and prosperity of the organisations they work for.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force, 2018)

A high proportion of Barnsley residents suffer from health problems and the demands for social care support are high across the borough. In addition, a high proportion of people provide un-paid care to friends and family. These residents require support and the opportunities to attend health and wellbeing groups or access health services within their communities.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://warwick.ac.uk/research/warwickcommission/futureculture>

*“Libraries offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality-assured reading lists dealing with the more common health conditions. In their role as community hubs, libraries also offer non-clinical spaces in localities where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue. This helps support people in self-care and in self-management of long-term conditions (LTCs). People with LTCs spend less than 1% of their time in contact with healthcare professionals and rely on community support to help them for the rest of the time.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force (2018) making reference to advice from NHS England)

The number of residents with access to transport is growing. However, a proportion of Barnsley residents still require the use of public transport. Currently, all residents have only a short distance to travel to access a library and all libraries have good public transport links and access. The library service also offers access to e-Books and a home library service.

In recent years we have seen more people visiting libraries, but less books being borrowed. There is an increasing demand for digital and online services including internet access which is freely available. Only 6.8% of the resident population are active borrowers of books and some of the libraries are under-utilised. Demographic segmentation analysis using Experian Mosaic<sup>8</sup> shows that residents from more affluent areas are more likely to use library services than residents of more deprived areas.

The findings from this needs assessment show there is a demand for libraries across the whole borough to meet the needs of those who live, work and study in Barnsley. However, active user data shows low numbers of users which is at odds with the demand illustrated by the Libraries Task Force.

*“Libraries are vital community hubs - bringing people together, and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better.”*

(Source: Libraries Deliver Report by the Libraries Task Force, 2018)

Residents of Barnsley have a number of different needs and they are spread across the borough. It is also recognised that the library service can support council priorities and activities which in turn, can contribute to improving local communities. However, the library service is currently underutilised, and the service should consider other opportunities to maximise the use of the valuable resources that libraries offer, therefore benefitting our communities as a whole.

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<sup>8</sup> Experian Mosaic is a “... consumer classification designed to help [public sector] understand the demographics, lifestyles, preferences and behaviours of the UK adult population ...” (Source: <https://www.experian.co.uk/marketing-services/products/mosaic/mosaic-in-detail.html>)