

# Your library, your place 2020-2030

Libraries strategy mid-term review



NORTH  
YORKSHIRE  
COUNCIL

# Introduction

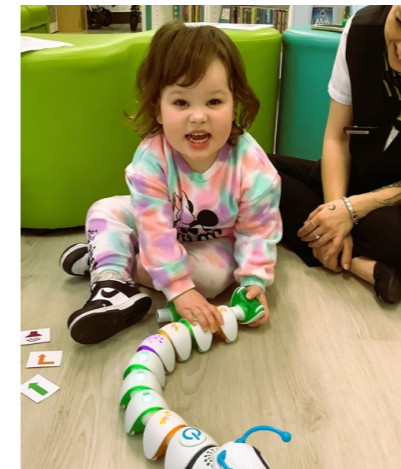
It's now five years since we launched 'Your Library Your Place' and libraries continue to go from strength to strength in North Yorkshire.

The last few years have seen some key challenges, not least the pandemic that saw libraries close their doors during lockdown. Staff and volunteers showed that they could adapt, developing innovative ideas to allow access to library services. Libraries had an important role in supporting home learning, providing the 24/7 digital library during this time and they were recognised as an essential service, re-opening in July 2020 to provide public computer access and a 'click and collect' service.

Libraries continue to be important community hubs, providing not just access to books, but spaces to meet, to be with others, to find things out and get IT help. They play an important role in supporting wider council services, helping people access Household Support Fund vouchers, blue badges and bus passes as well as being a key venue to get online and for face-to-face enquiries.

The last few years have seen other changes. In 2023 under local government reorganisation, Libraries across North Yorkshire came together in a new service area: Culture, Leisure, Archives and Libraries, reinforcing many natural links with colleagues in other parts of the new Council. In 2025, the service restructured to reflect new local area multi-agency working and a new library management system was implemented.

As our vision says, we are 'a family of libraries that nurtures opportunities through access to ideas, imagination and connections'.



This family includes all volunteers and partners engaged with delivering services - charities, voluntary organisations and external partners.

We recognise the huge contribution in time, energy, commitment and fund-raising efforts of community library groups which together with the staffing, infrastructure and financial support from North Yorkshire Council is critical in keeping all our libraries open.

Our services continue to be delivered in partnership with volunteers within our communities; only together can we continue to deliver a comprehensive county-wide statutory service.

This document sets out the strategic direction as to how the Council will continue to develop libraries in partnership with them. It celebrates the dedicated teams at all of our libraries and recognises the need for the continued support including funding, infrastructure and professional expertise.

The last few years have seen the service recognised nationally as high performing and innovative.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance states we are "a high performing low cost service" and our service delivery model is seen as a key example of community-based partnership working.

Long may this success continue.

**Councillor Simon Myers**


*Executive member for libraries*

# Let's celebrate!

Our family of libraries includes six core libraries, five hybrid libraries, 31 community libraries and a mobile library.

In 2024/25:

 **1,797,332** visits to libraries;

 **1,986,378** items borrowed;

 including **414,230** e-book and e-audiobook loans;

**Over 10,000** events;

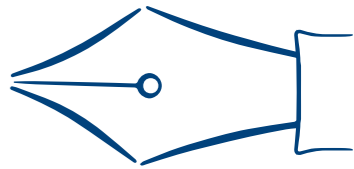
 **7,680** children joined the Summer Reading Challenge;

 our Home Library service volunteers delivered to over **1,000** people; and

 **23,084** individuals were supported to use IT.

*This wouldn't have been possible without the commitment of our 1,500 volunteers who contributed 139,750 hours of their time.*

# 1.8 million visitors a year can't be wrong!



*North Yorkshire Libraries received Libraries of Sanctuary status.*

*Newby and Scalby community library were recipients of the King's Award for voluntary service.*

*Bedale community library has featured on BBC Breakfast and BBC Radio 4.*

*Volunteer contributions at Catterick, Colburn and Richmond libraries (CRACCL) were formally acknowledged in the Hansard report, with special recognition from Baroness Angela Harris of Richmond.*

*Ey Up! Dialect project was runner up in the national Libraries Connected awards in the Culture & Creativity category.*

*Scarborough library received a £200k Libraries Improvement Fund grant and a refurbishment resulting in a 22% increase in visitors.*

*Starbeck, Norton, Kirkbymoorside, Northallerton and Ripon libraries have transformed their junior libraries.*

*Libraries Improvement Fund grant awarded for a new mobile library to be launched January 2026.*

- UK Shared Prosperity Grant Funding received to increase digital support across a wide range of libraries including our Mobile and to pilot offering support in housebound customers' homes.
- Used grant funding from Libraries Connected to launch Memory Bags for individuals with memory loss and their carers.
- Piloted and expanded a grant funded project gifting slippers to those at risk of falls in the home. Worked in partnership with active aging and cultural partners to host events across the county.
- A mix of loanable and static blood pressure monitors launched at 30 libraries across the county.
- Worked with a variety of cultural organisations to offer a variety of activities across our libraries from Black British Ballet to art exhibitions to author events and concerts.



# National and local strategic directions

The library service is a statutory service delivered under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Under the Act, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for ensuring councils fulfil this duty.

We consider that all our family of libraries are part of this statutory provision as recognised currently by Government.

This can only be maintained with the continued guidance, advice and support of North Yorkshire Council library staff together with access to a county-wide stock collection.

Networked resources managed via a single system to ensure a consistent offer and delivery of the core library service county-wide are also vital. Libraries also act as a key contact point for customers accessing council services.

Nationally the independent charity Libraries Connected supports, promotes and represents public libraries.

They have developed four Universal Library Offers that provide a framework for a high quality library service and demonstrate the power of libraries to enrich lives.

These Universal Offers inform our strategic planning and are reflected in the service agreements with community library groups, setting out a clear outline of key expectations.

Universal Offers	
Culture and Creativity	Enabling local communities to enjoy high-quality arts and cultural experiences through libraries.
Health and wellbeing	Supporting the health and wellbeing of communities through services that inform, engage and connect.
Information and Digital	Ensuring communities can access quality information and digital services, learn new digital skills and feel safe online.
Reading	Building a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

# Key expectations of libraries - as outlined in our service agreement



**Provide books in a variety of formats, including e-books and e-audio**



**Promote reading for pleasure, study and learning.**

**Arrange activities and events e.g. author visits, reading groups, story times, groups and creative opportunities.**



**Provide internet access and free Wi-Fi.**



**Assist customers to access council and public services and support them to use services online.**



**Help customers to use the digital library including e-books, e-magazines and online resources**

**Assist customers to find reliable information whether from books, the internet, or other organisations.**

**Provide information on local groups, societies, events and learning opportunities.**

**Provide a local, safe and neutral space for the community.**

**Help to reduce isolation by providing a home library service.**

**Signpost customers to other services.**

# Vision:

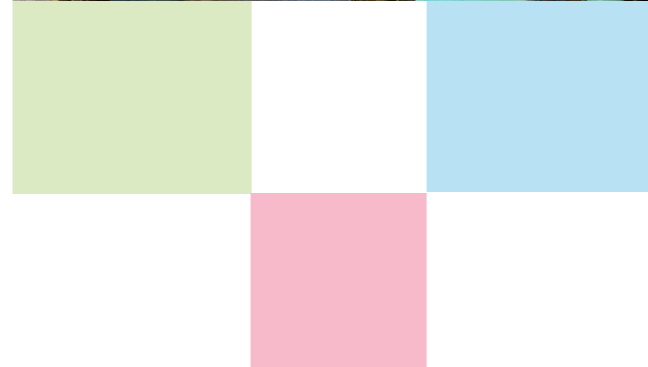
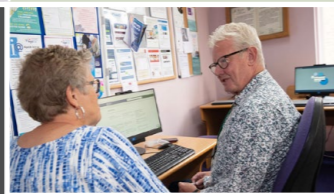


**“A family of libraries that nurtures opportunities through access to ideas, imagination and connections.”**

This strategy focuses on four core objectives for North Yorkshire reflecting local priorities as shown below. Set against the proven outcomes, research shows that libraries deliver: raising aspirations, stimulating enjoyment of culture and helping people live independent lives.

Our libraries will be at the heart of their community, owned and shaped by them, able to respond to changing demands and needs; a place to exchange, share, learn and create ideas. The first choice for people wanting to find out, learn, enjoy and read - with skilled teams to support their ambition.

Reading	Health & wellbeing	Digital	Communities
Support communities across North Yorkshire in developing a lifelong love of reading and to promote the many benefits of reading for pleasure.	Support the improvement of health and wellbeing in North Yorkshire.	Provide people with the resources, infrastructure, skills and support to be digitally connected.	Provide volunteering, cultural and development opportunities to support North Yorkshire communities



# Reading



**Why? Customers rely on their library as a trusted source of high-quality books and resources to support reading for pleasure, a powerful tool for lifelong development.**

## Strategic direction

- Promote enjoyment of reading for all ages and backgrounds.
- Develop and promote a diverse collection of books, eBooks and other materials that reflect and respond to community interests and needs.
- Empower our library teams with the skills and knowledge to support and inspire readers.
- Offer engaging reading experiences that spark curiosity and nurture imagination.
- Provide welcoming spaces and opportunities for reading, learning and connection.

## Case study

### Under 5s Week

Under 5s Week is an exciting celebration of early childhood across North Yorkshire Libraries, bringing stories, songs, and smiles to families with young children. Held each year, this joyful celebration opens doors to creativity, curiosity, and community connection. From lively storytimes and musical fun to imaginative play and parenting support, libraries have become vibrant, friendly spaces for children aged 0–4 and their families. In 2024 and 2025, nearly 180 events drew over 3,000 participants, with thousands of children's books borrowed and hundreds of new families joining the library.

Under 5s Week is more than just a celebration - it's a springboard for a lifelong love of reading and early learning. By connecting families with expert support and community partners, the initiative builds confidence in both children and parents, strengthens local networks, and ensures libraries remain central to early years support and development. It's a shining example of how libraries help every child in North Yorkshire have the best possible start in life.

**Aim: To support communities across North Yorkshire in developing a lifelong love of reading and to promote the many benefits of reading for pleasure.**

## Our ambitions

- To foster a lifelong love of reading.
- To position libraries as welcoming spaces to access opportunities and information to support personal development.
- To maintain a relevant, diverse and high-quality collection of materials tailored to local needs.
- To secure funding to deliver inspiring reading activities countywide.

## Activities

- Summer Reading Challenge
- Distributing free Bookstart packs
- Early years e.g storytimes, rhymetimes, nursery visits, Stay & Play
- Buzzy Bee's Honey Hunt reading scheme
- Reading events e.g. author talks, poetry readings, and creative workshops
- Book groups
- Class visits
- New resources and collections e.g. Tough Topics
- Partnerships e.g. The Reading Agency, Booktrust, National Literacy Trust, Adult Learning & Skills Service

## Expectations

- Champion national initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge and Bookstart.
- Deliver a programme of events such as storytimes, author visits, book groups, and creative workshops.
- Provide and support access to reading resources.
- Continuously evaluate and improve our reading offer to meet evolving community needs.



# Health and wellbeing

**Why? The library is an accessible and trusted place where people can find information and connections in a friendly and welcoming environment – a gateway to other services.**

## Strategic direction

- Promote health literacy through access to information and by connecting people to other services.
- Provide space and activities for people to come together, socialise, learn and explore creative and cultural ideas.
- Develop new partnerships and resources to support community needs including self-help reading and other materials.
- Respond to data and evidence around healthy aging, living well and growing well and act upon emerging priorities.

## Case study

Using funding from Arts Council England, North Yorkshire Libraries delivered a series of 12 vibrant and impactful Slipper Social events across the county. These events were designed to support older residents in maintaining independence, improving wellbeing, and preventing falls—one of the most common causes of injury among older adults. At the heart of each Slipper Social was the opportunity for attendees to be fitted with and receive a free pair of anti-slip slippers, specially selected to reduce the risk of falls caused by worn, loose, or backless footwear. More than 1,000 pairs of slippers were distributed, directly contributing to safer mobility for older people in their homes. However, the Slipper Socials were about much more than just footwear. They were carefully curated to provide a welcoming, inclusive

space where older adults could connect with others, and access vital health information. The events also served as a gateway to wider support services. Attendees reported increased awareness of fall prevention strategies, greater confidence in navigating their homes safely, and a renewed sense of connection with their communities. The events also helped reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness - issues that disproportionately affect older adults - by encouraging participation in local groups, clubs, and library activities. The Slipper Socials exemplified how libraries can play a vital role in supporting older people to live safer, healthier, and more connected lives. Through practical support, creative engagement, and community collaboration, these events made a lasting difference across North Yorkshire.



**Aim: To support the improvement of health and wellbeing in North Yorkshire.**

## Our ambitions

- To provide opportunities for people to engage in creative wellbeing where they can socialise, create and learn together.
- To promote connectedness for people with space to engage and find information about services in a safe environment.
- For people to feel empowered and able to support themselves to live independently and age well.
- To provide health material and resources relevant to communities and in response to needs.

- Seated and exercise taster sessions
- Healthy living roadshows and advice sessions
- Advice drop-ins
- Coffee and conversation
- Wellbeing bags
- Public health campaigns
- Slipper Socials
- Breastfeeding friendly venues
- Blood pressure monitors

## Expectations

- Utilise local and national initiatives such as Living Well, social prescribers and voluntary organisations.
- Facilitate the delivery of a programme of physical and creative activities.
- Deliver groups such as knit and natter and coffee and conversation.
- Showcase healthy living roadshows and drop-ins with health and wellbeing partners.
- Be supportive of and responsive to conditions such as dementia, neurodiversity and sight loss
- Provide resources and information on a variety of health conditions.

# Digital



**Why? Libraries help bridge the digital divide by providing support and information through technology.**

## Strategic direction

- Provide opportunities that support people to become more digitally confident.
- Support communities to access council services.
- Develop and promote access to digital library services.
- Ensure that computer and digital library resources meet current demands.
- Offer opportunities for using digital innovation and creativity.
- Empower individuals and communities by improving digital connectivity.

## Case study

### IT Buddies

The IT Buddy initiative continues to make a significant difference across North Yorkshire libraries, transforming lives—one session at a time. Throughout 2024–2025, libraries across the county delivered 23,808 assisted IT sessions, reflecting the growing demand and value of this support.

IT Buddy Naomi finds joy in helping those who struggle with online services, “Helping makes me feel happy, knowing that I have relieved a customer’s anxiety.” A Selby Library customer fed back, “I would never have managed getting through this form without your assistance. Thank you so much, this will change my life for the better.” Many visitors come to libraries with devices gifted by family members, feeling overwhelmed by the technology. IT Buddy Peter, who volunteers at Scarborough and Newby and Scalby Libraries, finds joy in bridging this gap. He shares, “It’s a pleasure. I enjoy helping people. It’s wonderful to see someone leave with a smile.”



**Aim: To provide people with the resources, infrastructure, skills and support to be digitally connected.**

## Our ambitions

- To foster digitally skilled people and communities.
- To provide support to digitally excluded members of society to bridge the digital divide.
- To be a leading e-library embracing digital technology.
- To empower customers in embracing self-service methods in 95% of interactions, while maintaining our unwavering commitment to high quality customer service.
- To provide a quality online presence through the library website, social media and partner organisations.
- To support science, technology, engineering, arts and maths (STEAM) learning to raise aspirations and broaden career prospects.
- To be at the forefront of advances in reading technology and resources including our digital library.

## Activities

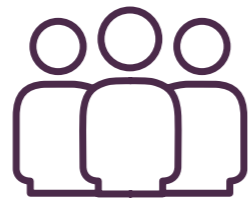
- Support to use digital resources
- Support to access council services
- Digital library
- IT Buddy volunteering
- Get Online Week
- Online learning opportunities
- STEAM activities (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths)

## Expectations

- Support a network of IT Buddies, staff and volunteers to provide ample opportunities for digital inclusion for all.
- Enhance the digital inclusion provision through partnership working, the Mobile Library, access to equipment and in branch customer support.
- Provide access to digitally creative resources and activities.
- Support to use digital resources.
- Support access to on-line learning.
- Utilise advancements in Artificial Intelligence.
- Support customer through signposting to trustworthy sources and partner organisations.



# Communities



**Why? Libraries are safe, inclusive and comfortable community spaces able to inspire, broaden horizons and celebrate culture, creativity and diversity**

## Strategic direction

- Develop services and activities to reflect the needs and aspirations of our communities.
- Work in partnership with local people and organisations to encourage engagement with communities.
- Provide opportunities for volunteering and participation by all.
- Create a welcoming environment for everyone.
- Continuously update the local and family history collections in our main centres of population.
- Develop remote access to local history material through digitisation.
- Support entrepreneurs and employability skills.
- Offer cultural and creative opportunities to our communities.

## Case study

North Yorkshire Libraries were thrilled to be selected to participate in a nationwide project funded by a £245,500 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. "Into the Light: Pioneers of Black British Ballet" brought together archive photography, film, newspaper articles and posters alongside new video and audio interviews which traced the history of black British ballet from the 1940s to the present day. This unique partnership between creative agency Oxygen Arts, Libraries Connected and North Yorkshire Libraries enabled over 100 Scarborough primary school pupils to experience the power of storytelling through dance, with a performance of "Island Movements: An epic tale of the lives of a family from the Windrush generation" at Scarborough Library. This short ballet told the story of Windrush and explored the impact

of the Windrush generation's experiences on their families, communities, and society. The performance held the audience enthralled, with one child commenting "It was a really good story and the amount of emotion they put in it was AMAZING". Teachers at the event spoke of the impact of this opportunity, which enabled their classes to participate in a free creative and culturally diverse event showcasing such an important period in history – which would not have been possible had it not been for North Yorkshire Libraries - "Thank you for inviting us to this wonderful experience. Our pupils gained such a lot from watching a live performance". This event was complemented by a month-long exhibition at Scarborough Library and a series of workshops at libraries across the county which engaged with over 350 primary school children.



**Aim: To provide volunteering, cultural and development opportunities to support North Yorkshire communities.**

## Our ambitions

- That libraries are the destination of choice for access to information, reading opportunities and creative cultural activities.
- For libraries to be the key place for other services to connect with communities and individuals to connect with other services.
- To build on cultural connections, helping to combat loneliness and isolation.
- For libraries to have a positive impact on an individual's sense of place; connecting language, cultures and generations.
- To celebrate North Yorkshire past and present.

## Activities

- Community events
- Volunteering
- Access to council resources
- Local information
- Local history collections in main centres
- Local history groups
- Home Library Service
- Creativity, Culture and Arts

## Expectations

- Provide opportunities for volunteering, participation and community engagement.
- Develop main local study collections to be accessible county wide.
- Provide a venue for council communications, consultations and campaigns.
- Provide a range of activities to bring individuals together.







## Contact us

Online: [northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us](https://northyorks.gov.uk/contact-us)

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