

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee - 4 March 2026

**Subject:** Manchester Libraries Update

**Report of:** Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

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**Summary**

The purpose of the report is to provide the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee with an update on delivery of the library strategy and to present future plans. The report focuses on highlights from the last 12 months.

**Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information in the report.

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**Wards Affected:** All Wards

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	Libraries support the zero-carbon agenda. This includes high quality, low-carbon buildings that are community hubs to be used by multiple organisations, that libraries encourage books to be read by multiple people and the increase in eBooks – reducing the use of paper. We have signed up to the Green Libraries manifesto, and have delivered the externally funded Culture Nature project creating seed libraries in 8 libraries.
<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments	As this is an update report, an EQIA has not been carried out specifically on the report. Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of the library service. Examples of excellent EDI initiatives are outlined throughout the report.
<b>Children and Young People</b> – the impact of the issues addressed in this report on children and young people	Libraries are used by all ages of the population, and children & young people are heavy users of the service. There are excellent examples of services to children throughout this report. This year we have developed Youth Friendly Library standards, in consultation with groups of young people

Our Manchester Strategy Outcomes	Summary of how the contents of the report supports the delivery of the Our Manchester Strategy
<p><b>Our People:</b> Our People is about everyone who calls Manchester home, making sure they can live their best lives.</p> <p>Our People will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be healthy, happy and active from childhood to adulthood.</li> <li>- Have a great education and be able to learn new skills as they grow older, so they can get the best jobs.</li> <li>- Be proud of our diversity, feel valued and included, knowing they belong.</li> <li>- Participate, engage and influence decisions about their communities and neighbourhoods.</li> <li>- Be safe online and in person.</li> </ul>	<p>Libraries are at the heart of our communities. They are safe, welcoming spaces that offer a wide range of services and activities for free that help to build and maintain community cohesion and pride in place – this has been more important than ever in response to the riots summer 2025. We are accredited Libraries of Sanctuary, and support the Council’s Local Authority of Sanctuary work. Libraries have always supported those that need the help the most.</p> <p>Libraries assist in raising literacy and skills levels, including enabling our youngest residents to become school ready, helping to deliver Read Manchester.</p>
<p><b>Our Neighbourhoods:</b> Our Neighbourhoods is about the places we live, making sure they’re places to be proud of.</p> <p>Our Neighbourhoods will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have enough good quality, genuinely affordable homes.</li> <li>- Be attractive and well-kept with good facilities, services and green spaces.</li> </ul>	<p>Good local libraries are part of the fabric of neighbourhoods, helping to sustain pride in Manchester and its communities. We have a high quality, low carbon estate, including Chorlton Library which benefitted from a major transformation and restoration this year. Manchester Central Library is a regional, national and international visitor attraction. Manchester Libraries have signed up to the Green Libraries Manifesto</p>

<p><b>Our City:</b> Our City is about the things that will secure our future, that make us one of the best places in the world.</p> <p>Our City will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have a growing economy that provides jobs and equal opportunities for everyone.</li> <li>- Adapt to a changing climate and rapidly reduce its carbon emissions.</li> <li>- Enjoy world-renowned things for everyone to see and do, showcasing our passion for sport and culture.</li> <li>- Have reliable transport that gets you where you want to go, quickly, cheaply, safely and cleanly.</li> <li>- Embrace technology to achieve the city's aims, safely and ethically.</li> </ul>	<p>Libraries enable people to improve their skills, apply for work on-line, offer and offer volunteering opportunities, increasing residents' employability. Libraries lead the Council's work on reducing digital exclusion amongst residents, developing and implementing the Digital Inclusion Action Plan. Libraries support businesses through the Business and IP Centres and the Generator Spaces.</p> <p>Libraries are a key location for residents to access digital technology and helping build skills that will assist future generation of Mancunians to sustain the growth of the city. Our digital inclusion work is increasing connectivity in homes, and feeds into the Council's Digital Strategy.</p>
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Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

None

### **Contact Officers:**

Name: Neil MacInnes OBE  
Position: Head of Libraries, Galleries and Culture  
Telephone: 0161 234 1902  
E-mail: neil.macinnes@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Philip Cooke  
Position: Libraries and Archives Lead  
Telephone: 07773206277

E-mail: philip.cooke@manchester.gov.uk

Name: John Rooney  
Position: Director of Neighbourhood Delivery  
Telephone: 07971 384877  
E-mail: john.rooney@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Neil Fairlamb  
Position: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)  
E-mail: neil.fairlamb@manchester.gov.uk

**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None.

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Communities and Equalities Scrutiny Committee with an update on delivery of the library strategy and to present future plans. The report focuses on highlights from the last 12 months.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 Manchester's libraries embody the Our Manchester Strategy, providing locally based, customer focussed services at the heart of communities. The service contributes greatly to Manchester Strategy Outcomes. Manchester's Library, Information and Archives Service delivers leisure, cultural, learning and information services through a network of 15 neighbourhood libraries, 6 community partnership libraries and the internationally renowned world class Central Library – the most visited public library in the country. The service also operates 24-hour virtual library, HMP Manchester Prison library and Books to Go (housebound) service. Manchester Libraries manages the Greater Manchester County Record Office function on behalf of GMCA which holds records from across the city region. Manchester Libraries also leads on digital inclusion for the Council and city.
- 2.2 Manchester Libraries work alongside the other nine authorities in Greater Manchester, providing one catalogue across the ten boroughs (giving access to 3m items to borrow, one membership opportunity and progressing joint projects which provide benefit for residents and improved value for money, such as a shared library management system, joint procurement of e-books and working together on priorities such as 'green libraries'.
- 2.3 We attend Core Cities Libraries Connected meetings where we discuss and compare key issues, sharing best practice and future planning.
- 2.4 The library service is supported by Manchester Libraries Trust, which over the last decade has raised almost £1million towards the initial capital refurbishment, cultural and educational programming and development of the archive, all benefiting local communities as well as activity to encourage regional, national and international visitors.

## **3.0 Main issues: Delivering the Library Strategy in 2025 and beyond**

- 3.1 2025 was the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Public Libraries Act 1850, which in 1852 led to the opening of the country's first rate supported public lending and reference library – Manchester Free Library in the Hall of Science, Campfield. We produced an exhibition that celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary which was displayed at Central Library and was highlighted during a national Libraries 175-day conference in September which featured a talk from the DCMS Libraries Minister Baroness Twycross.
- 3.2 In 2023 we produced a new vision for Manchester Libraries which is included in Appendix 1. The vision set out how libraries contribute to Manchester being a high-class city improving the lives of residents and neighbourhoods and sets

out the priorities for coming years. The key priorities identified are: Our Manchester Our People, Literacy & Reading, Health & Wellbeing, Culture & Creativity and Digital Inclusion. Appendix 3 lays out how we've made progress on delivering this vision.

- 3.3 The library service has evolved and reinvented itself over the past decade and, whilst seeing significant reduction in revenue funding, we have seen approximately £100 million capital investment, including the £50 million transformation of Manchester Central Library. In the last 10 years we have achieved a success of having over 90% of our libraries into new or refurbished or co-located premises. The Libraries Capital Programme continues to see significant investment into the service, improving the estate and service further. The 2023 Adult Public Library User Survey reported that over 93% of customers were satisfied with the service – the highest satisfaction rating we have ever received. Manchester Libraries continue to provide a strong, key and vital role in the heart of their communities and neighbourhoods supporting learning, literacy, economic opportunity and inspiration, through the 4 universal public library offers around reading, information & digital, health & wellbeing, culture & creativity. Libraries have a coherent structured offer which meets the current and future needs of our residents and also ensure that our service offer is aligned to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan. We are developing plans to grow back further, if possible, with extended opening hours, increased activity programming and maximising increased availability of library space for use from other organisations and partner agencies.
- 3.4 As valued and trusted community spaces, libraries act as a shop front and access point for a range of other council services, partner organisations and VCFSE organisations, enabling people to access these services at a local level. A wide range of council services are delivered through our network of libraries - for example Citizens Advice Manchester sessions, adult learning youth provision, councillor surgeries, benefits advice, job advice from the Growth Company Employment Services, subsidised food provision and many other advice sessions. This has been particularly beneficial to residents during the cost-of-living crisis, where libraries have been the Council's warm spaces, acting as the neighbourhood living rooms. This has increased in the last 12 months, including delivery of housing services at Avenue Library.
- 3.5 Library services also provide significant support for key Manchester City Council objectives such as raising literacy levels (both reading skills and digital), reducing dependency, sustaining local neighbourhoods and creating economic growth, and have a critical and key role in supporting the City Council's priorities. Libraries manage Read Manchester with the aim of spreading the love of reading throughout the city and increasing literacy levels with children and adults. 2025 is the National Year of Reading, which will develop and amplify Read Manchester's programme. Manchester Libraries have a leading role with digital inclusion for the Council and city. We work with the VCFSE sector to reduce digital exclusion across community venues and in people's homes. Libraries also play a vital role through the provision of free

public access to computers, free Wi-Fi, access to information and advice sessions.

- 3.6 This has been a great 12 months for Manchester Libraries. We were awarded 'Library of the Year' at the 2025 Bookseller Awards for the BBC Blue Peter Book Trail project. We also were awarded the prestigious national Libraries Connected Culture and Creativity Award, for the Forum Library Creative Space. We are also among the first 20 Local Authorities to be invited onto the new Libraries Development Framework administered by Arts Council England. We scored the highest grading of 'Strongly Met' in each criteria of the assessment. These are all indications of Manchester Libraries high quality.
- 3.7 In 2024 Central Library celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the hugely successful transformation and the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of Central Library in St Peters Square. There was a joyous 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration in July 2024 featuring a range of speakers and VIPs and performances from local community groups. The library continues to be the most visited public library in the United Kingdom, attracting a diverse range of residents as well as being a key attraction for visitors from outside the city. Part of the transformation vision for Central Library was to be an inclusive space, the city's living room and treasure trove appealing to families, children and young people, aspiring entrepreneurs and visitors to the city, as well as traditional library visitors. Central Library's cultural programme, Library Live, which has, previously, been supported by Arts Council England, exists as a busy and diverse cultural programme for everyone to enjoy.
- 3.8 Across the city, our neighbourhood libraries and community partnership libraries - play an integral role in their local communities, acting as safe, trusted, socially inclusive, free, accessible, welcoming and non-threatening spaces, that play a significant role in helping to address deprivation and inequality. Research has shown that using libraries improves residents' health and wellbeing by combating loneliness and social isolation, as well as providing a quiet place to study and read. We support customers with reading for pleasure and literacy, and the level of borrowing is increasing – both books and eBooks/eAudio. Our libraries bring culture to people's doorsteps and often provide residents with the easiest to access cultural opportunities through events and activities using a wide range of partner organisations.
- 3.9 Libraries are the primary community venue for residents to access IT, and offer training, support and assistance to residents, with each library having a weekly digital drop-in session. This is done through staff, digital champion volunteers and partner organisations, for example Citizens Advice Manchester, which offers highly popular weekly digital-advice sessions at libraries across the city. Libraries also donate free SIMs for residents, to tackle data poverty – 9000 being donated in the last 12 months.
- 3.10 Fundamental to our ability to provide a high-quality breadth and range of services is the need to work well and effectively with a broad spectrum of partners and volunteers. Our partnership working across the city ranges from

local community groups such as The Bread and Butter Thing and Citizens Advice Manchester to specialist intellectual property lawyers who give their time pro-bono to support fledgling entrepreneurs, to the British Library, Manchester Metropolitan University, The University of Manchester, the Manchester College, Arts Council England and The National Archives. Over 300 volunteers enable us to make the best use of the resources available within the city; increasing the number of volunteers further is a key priority for 2026.

- 3.11 The library strategy, originally developed in 2008, decided to focus on co-location rather than stand-alone libraries based on the success of North City Library, Harpurhey and the remodelling of The Forum, Wythenshawe - looking at needs, opportunities and estate challenges across the city.
- 3.12 Manchester City Council has consistently chosen to invest in its libraries, refurbishing and transforming several and opening new co-located libraries where possible. Co-locating services has improved customer experience, extended service provision, increased visitor numbers and spread costs and driven efficiencies. As a result, we have a modern, high quality network of libraries with a more extensive and accessible service offer and programme, with a wider range of partners, contributing to a much wider set of outcomes, at a lower overall ongoing revenue cost. The modern public library is now one of the last remaining free and publicly accessible to all face-to-face offer with our residents and is the front door to the council and other public service agencies. This has been increasingly important with the current cost of living crisis and supporting our residents in relation to digital exclusion and providing wider support and signposting. This has been achieved as a consequence of having a clear strategy, willingness to invest, a strong officer and civic leadership and deploying capital resources wisely.
- 3.13 Since 2021 this investment has continued with a programme for citywide library renewal works to ensure that all libraries are in a strong position to serve their local communities for the next decade. Works include redecoration, refreshment and replacement of furnishings and equipment. This has included:
  - Remodelling Newton Heath Library to create a new community meeting room and interview/advice room.
  - Refreshing other libraries such as Central Library and Archives +, Hulme High Street, Forum, Didsbury, North City and Longsight.
  - A new Gorton Library opened in the new integrated Gorton Hub in 2022, Abraham Moss Library as part of the new Library and Leisure Centre in 2023, and relocated Northenden Community Library to St Wilfrid's Church Hall in early 2024.
  - A new creative space in Wythenshawe Forum Library, using £200k capital investment from Arts Council England.
- 3.14 Significant capital investment has continued in the last 12 months and is continuing in 2026. The grade 2 listed Chorlton Library, the oldest operation library in the library estate, was fully refurbished, with a budget for capital works, supplemented by additional AMP works, making best use of

Manchester City Council resources. The works restored the magnificent historic dome over the lobby area that has been covered over in previous refurbishments, restored the library, created four meeting rooms including in the 1970's extension area. The introduction of the Open Plus access system has increased opening hours by 20 hours per week.

- 3.15 We are currently delivering the next phase of library renewal with a £500k capital investment. The £500k is ensuring that all libraries are in a strong position to serve their local communities for the next decade. Works include redecoration, refreshment and replacement of furnishings and equipment, and creation of confidential advice spaces to enable confidential information and advice sessions to be delivered. Libraries that have benefitted in the last 12 months include Newton Heath Library, Arcadia Library, Hulme High Street Library and Withington Library. A pod, providing confidential meeting space has been implemented at North City Library and is proving extremely popular.
- 3.16 This next phase of the library strategy will secure the standard of the library offer for another 10 years. This could include increased staffed opening hours. Existing spaces will be adapted and/or remodelled to better meet changing community needs, broadening the service available across our estate, including enhancing our local history and heritage offer, which strengthens and builds place pride within communities. With a refreshed library offer, they will be in a stronger position to be better used as a wider community asset and the proposal would enable better and longer community use, making the spaces more sustainable ("sweating the asset") thus assisting in helping MCC meet carbon neutral targets.
- 3.17 In 2023 we produced a new vision for Manchester Libraries which is included in Appendix 3. The vision set out how libraries contribute to Manchester being a high-class city improving the lives of residents and neighbourhoods and sets out the priorities for coming years. The key priorities identified are: Our Manchester Our People, Literacy & Reading, Health & Wellbeing, Culture & Creativity and Digital Inclusion.
- 3.18 We have begun a programme of community outreach, to raise awareness of libraries with individuals and community groups. We are developing Ward Engagement Plans for each library that analyses the demographics of that ward, analyses current library membership and engagement activity, to inform a programme of engagement work within each ward. Examples include developing partnerships with community groups, library posters in community venues, outreach sessions in supermarkets and joining in with community-based events. The pilot plans have been developed for Sharston Ward and Harpurhey Ward.
- 3.19 2026 is the National Year of Reading, which is a Department for Education initiative to change the nation's reading culture in 2026 and beyond. Read Manchester and Libraries will be maximising the opportunities presented by this, to engage new audiences in reading and promote reading for pleasure. We will ensure we hold high profile activity for initiatives that are in the national calendar, including Summer Reading Challenge and Take 10 – which

promotes the message that 10 minutes of reading per day boosts mental health. We will also develop partnerships with different organisations and take reading into the community as part of the outreach programme mentioned above.

- 3.20 Manchester Libraries this year have launched an innovative partnership between Chorlton Library and City of Melbourne Libraries. This work has already resulted in Chorlton Library being donated books related to First Nation communities, and will develop to include joint social media promotion and activities.
- 3.21 The library service contributes hugely to the Council's Corporate Plan Priority Outcomes and other strategies, including the Our Manchester Strategy 2025-35, the Economic Strategy, Making Manchester Fairer, Making Manchester Fairer: Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023-27, Manchester Age Friendly Strategy, Manchester Digital Strategy 2021-26 and the Cultural Strategy (Always, Everywhere) which will place libraries as cultural hubs in their communities. Libraries have also contributed greatly to Manchester's Local Authority of Sanctuary accreditation and UNESCO City of Learning status. Examples of our contributions follow below.

#### **3.21.1 Investing in Success an Economic Strategy for Manchester**

This strategy stresses the importance of inclusive growth. Libraries are a key contributor of this, with libraries contributing to a skilled local workforce through their role supporting lifelong learning and information provision. Specific work around digital inclusion, business support, the Greater Manchester wide Build a Business project and the generator spaces increase the role libraries play supporting this strategy.

#### **3.21.2 Making Manchester Fairer: Anti-Poverty Strategy 2023-27**

Libraries have always been a democratic space where support is given to those who need it the most. Use of the library computers is disproportionately from people who live in areas of most deprivation. All libraries are warm spaces providing free hot drinks, a warm place to stay and supplementary support from October to February each year.

#### **3.21.3 Manchester Age Friendly Strategy**

Libraries are heavily used by older people and contribute greatly to this strategy. Manchester Libraries have developed a set of Age Friendly Standards.

- 3.22 The library service contributes hugely to the Council's Corporate Plan Priority Outcomes

#### **3.22.1 Contributing to achieving the zero-carbon target for the city**

Libraries are possibly the longest standing re-use and recycling programme through the borrow and use of a book by multiple people. The increase in lending of Ebooks and Eaudio books reduces the carbon footprint of reading in the city still further. We have signed up to the Green Libraries Manifesto <https://www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=greenlibrariesmanifesto>. The library estate contains generally good quality buildings with excellent carbon emission standards, and the capital investment into several of the libraries improves this further. By widening use of libraries as community hubs, we are preventing the need for other services and organisations to have their own buildings and reducing travel time amongst staff and partner organisations. Neighbourhood libraries are accessible for partners as workplaces and for service delivery, supporting the Our Manchester and Bringing Services Together approaches. They can also be used for environmental and climate change campaigns, including Keep Manchester Tidy, which itself contributes towards carbon emission reductions. Each library is a collection point for old devices. These get refurbished by Community Computers and given at low cost or no cost to Manchester residents - benefiting the resident and reducing waste. Every library offers paper and card recycling to residents and gives out green food waste bags.

### **3.22.2 Growth that benefits everyone**

Libraries develop and implement the Council's Digital Action Plan, which feeds into the Digital Strategy. This work reduces the number of digitally excluded residents in the city and increases the level of digital skills. People without digital skills are at increased the level of disadvantage – e.g. unemployment, low wage employment, social isolation, financial poverty. The Business & IP Centre (based at Central Library) and the Build a Business in GM Libraries initiative support the establishment and growth of start-up businesses, increasing the number of successful businesses in the city and the creation of jobs and opportunities. Libraries play an important role in supporting the business community in Manchester, and across Greater Manchester, offering insights and access to free resources, training and events Generator spaces opened on the ground floor of Town Hall Extension and in Royal Mills, Ancoats in 2024. These joint working spaces provide entrepreneurs and start-up businesses with space to work and access to support sessions and peer networking.

### **3.22.3 Young People**

Libraries support young people from 0-18 years. These include ongoing access and promotion of reading, joint initiatives with Read Manchester, events and activities including weekly storytimes at each library and Summer Reading Challenge, school engagement and developing more services with young people. This year we have developed Youth Friendly Library Standards, in consultation with groups of young people including young carers and the Youth Council.

### **3.22.4 Healthy Cared-For People**

People who use a library have improved health and wellbeing. The CIPFA Public Library User Survey of 2023 reported that over 80% of Manchester's respondents who sometimes felt lonely, felt less lonely after using the library. Libraries reduce social isolation for a whole range of their customers – from mums and dads attending storytimes with their children, to older people who use the library for social interaction in a welcoming environment, and Books to Go customers who are housebound and may not see anyone else for a few days apart from the delivery driver who provides a range of books. Reading is proven to improve your wellbeing. To promote this, we have developed the Take 10 initiative which takes place annually on 10<sup>th</sup> October, which is World Mental Health Day. This event which encourages people to read for 10 minutes a day has been taken up nationally as one of the National Year of Reading major events. Libraries are key for residents receiving accurate health information, through digital access, health information and books on prescription and reading well collections. Libraries have also established digital health hubs in various areas of the city to offer support on the NHS App and MyMFT App. Libraries are also used by partner organisations to deliver health promotion sessions.

### **3.22.5 Housing**

Libraries contribute to the social infrastructure of successful and cohesive local communities. We have recently developed a partnership with Housing Solutions to enable their staff to use 3 libraries to offer services to their clients. We will look to expand this offer to more libraries in coming months. We work in partnership with Housing providers to reduce digital exclusion within their residents – to the benefits of the tenants and the housing providers. We work with organisations such as Lifeshare and Booth Centre to encourage and enable homeless people to access library services. As part of our Digital Inclusion Action Plan we have encouraged housing associations and homelessness organisations to embed digital inclusion in their work.

### **3.22.6 Neighbourhoods**

Libraries are the beating heart of communities, being used by the communities they reside in. Library usage is representative of their local population. They are well used venues key to successful and cohesive local communities. As community hubs they are used to gain access to skills, creative opportunities, digital access and access to a wide range of services at neighbourhood level. Libraries are increasingly becoming community hubs used to meet a whole range of priorities of people in the neighbourhood. The existence of a library within the neighbourhood is a critical factor to the quality of life of communities and residents in the neighbourhood. They are vital in the Council's response to the current cost of living crisis, with each library acting as a 'warm space', offering free hot drinks. Libraries role in supporting community cohesion has been more important than ever following the riots of Summer 2024. In 2024 libraries accreditation as libraries of sanctuary was extended for a further year.

### **3.22.7 Connections**

Libraries ensure residents are digitally connected – particularly those who do not have Internet access at home. Each library offers free Internet access and high-speed Wi-Fi. All computers in all libraries have been upgraded in the last 18 months. All libraries have recently had upgraded Wi-Fi provision including Central Library in August.

### **3.22.8 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are at the forefront of everything libraries do. Libraries are representative of the diverse communities in which they are located and are a key means to increase community cohesion. The book stock is diverse, including the recent 'See Myself in Books' initiative and the events programme outlined contains artists and authors from diverse backgrounds and is attractive to all. Key EDI events are celebrated in libraries such as Black History Month, South Asian Heritage Month, International Women's Day, LGBTQ+ History Month and International Mother Language Day. In March we are running our second 'See Myself in Books Festival' Manchester Libraries are accredited Libraries of Sanctuary. This year we have completed EIAs on Open+ and the temporary closure of Central Library in August for the WiFi upgrade and currently conducting one for Community Language Collections in libraries. We have purchased Ebooks in the top 10 languages spoken in Manchester.

### **3.22.9 A Well Managed Council**

By widening use of libraries as community hubs, we are preventing the need for other services and organisations to have their own buildings and reducing travel time amongst staff and partner organisations. Neighbourhood libraries are accessible for partners as workplaces and for service delivery, in an Our Manchester and Bringing Services Together approach. Libraries are front door to council services, and other partner organisations. This can range from supporting a wide range of key messages from the council – including Keep Manchester Tidy, Budget consultations, to supporting residents with accessing specific initiatives online, including applying for parking permits and applying for a Voter Authority Certificate. For example, Housing Solutions have recently started delivering services from 3 libraries.

### **3.23 External Funding**

In the last 12 months libraries have brought in significant external funding to deliver additional services on top of mainstream budgets. This includes

- £800k UKSPF funding to support start-up businesses across Greater Manchester.
- £437k UKSPF funding to support start-up businesses in Manchester via 2 Generator spaces
- £120k from GMCA to support digital inclusion

- £270k from the Department for Science Innovation and Technology to support digital inclusion in schools
- £100k from National Lottery Heritage Fund to digitise the Piccadilly Radio Archives and run related engagement events
- £20k from Arts Council England for Digital Spaces – to create the Marcus Rashford Archives learning resource
- In addition, we have been partners to several National Lottery Heritage Fund archive projects which have resulted in high quality exhibitions in Central Library, including George House Trust and Lip Service

### 3.24 **Libraries and community cohesion**

Libraries are at the heart of our communities and offer a wide range of services and activities for free that help to build and maintain community cohesion and pride in place – this has been more important than ever since the riots of Summer 2024. Manchester Libraries are perfectly placed to support Pride in Place. Manchester’s libraries are used by all communities who use the spaces and services side-by-side. This has been underlined by the Libraries of Sanctuary initiative. Originally becoming Libraries of Sanctuary in 2021, we reaccredited in 2024, demonstrating how libraries offer a warm welcome to asylum seekers and refugees. Libraries are a core element of Manchester City Council’s Local Authority of Sanctuary accreditation. Building on our work supporting the Ukrainian communities in Manchester, Manchester Libraries are twinned with Lviv Regional Youth Library, and hosted an art exhibition from Ukraine and workshops with schoolchildren in February 2026. An example of libraries and archives bringing together communities in hope is the Marcus Rashford Archives Digital learning resource launched in January.

- 3.25 A key priority for the next 12 months is marketing of the library service, which will complement our outreach and engagement programme. Widening access and participation and visits to libraries remains crucial to Manchester Libraries strategy. We will continue to grow the monthly podcast which was launched in 2025, <https://manclibraries.blog/2025/01/21/manchester-libraries-launch-brand-new-monthly-podcast/>. We will continue to be active on social media and distribute e-newsletters to tens of thousands of subscribers. We will also develop leaflets, bookmark and posters to be held in other community venues and distributed at outreach events to attract current non-users of libraries.

## 4.0 **Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the information in the report.

## 5.0 **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 - Libraries 2025 infographics
- Appendix 2 - Activity per library
- Appendix 3 - Library vision 2023-28
- Appendix 4 - Library vision update 2025

Appendix 5 - Universal library offers  
Appendix 6 - Read Manchester, Children, Young People & school engagement  
Appendix 7 - Supporting business  
Appendix 8 - Cultural and creative programme  
Appendix 9 - Health and wellbeing (including age friendly)  
Appendix 10 - Lifelong learning  
Appendix 11 - Libraries of Sanctuary Action Plan  
Appendix 12 - Archives  
Appendix 13 - Green Libraries – including Recycling in libraries  
Appendix 14 – Testimonials  
Appendix 15 – Sharston ward engagement plan  
Appendix 16 – Performance data  
Appendix 17 – Public library user survey 2025  
Appendix 18 – Gale Whitby case study

## **6.0 Glossary of Abbreviations**

The Business & IP Centre – Business and Intellectual Property Centre

## Appendix 1 – Infographics of Manchester Libraries in 2025



## Appendix 2 – Range of Services per library: Feb 2025– Feb 2026

Library	Highlights of the last 12 months
Abraham Moss	<p>The library is well used by young people and following consultation, we have developed a programme of after school events. Uno has proved to be one of the most popular games along with chess and cards. We hold a weekly chess club which is well attended.</p> <p>Working with GLL, we also now offer an after-school table tennis activity for around 15 young people, and this will expand to use of the pool table and football table in early 2026, with the possibility of medals to reward positive engagement being explored.</p> <p>HAF continues to prove popular and this Christmas we offered a Christmas party and a silent disco.</p>
Arcadia	<p>Arcadia Library and Leisure Centre celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in February 2026. The library space was refreshed during 2025, with new benching, desks, seating and tables to create a modern and unified feel, with excellent feedback from customers.</p> <p>This year family usage has increased, as has attendance at coffee mornings and story time. Excellent engagement has enabled the library to thrive and flourish and continue its role as the heart of the community in Levenshulme.</p> <p>There is a regular young people club on a Friday which gives library space over to young people, giving them ownership and allowing them to take pride in the library.</p>
Avenue	<p>In May, the crochet group at Avenue were involved in making rugby balls and bunting for the Women’s Rugby World Cup, which were then displayed in libraries and galleries for the duration of the tournament. The RFU provided the template patterns, and Manchester Active purchased yarn sets.</p> <p>For Remembrance Sunday, the crochet group created a fabulous poppy display, including lots of knitted and crocheted poppies designed to create a waterfall display. Staff also took part in this and altogether we had approx. 300 poppies.</p>
Barlow Moor	<p>Barlow Moor Library supporting Mersey Fest 2025 we ran a stall offering free fun crafts. As part of Chorlton book Festival we went into the after-school club and ran a session decorating tote bags and making bead bag decorations.</p> <p>As part of Barlow Moor Community Associations Spooky-Fest event, we had a library stall gifting free books and doing Halloween crafts, it was a busy afternoon with lots of lovely interactions with members of the community.</p>
Beswick	<p>Being on site with The East Manchester Academy (TEMA), many activities are focused on young people. The after-school Chess Club has continued to be very popular, with a popular chess tournament held, with 30 or so players all from TEMA, engaged. The students loved it and asked if we could hold further tournaments.</p> <p>Creative writing sessions take place with TEMA students after school, and at Christmas, library staff supported students to write a ghost story for a Christmas short story competition.</p>

	<p>Around 5 TEMA leadership team students, supported by a teacher, volunteer in the library twice a week to offer support with various library activities including warm spaces, supporting customers online and to use the self-service kiosks.</p>
<p>Brooklands</p>	<p>Highlights of activities at Brooklands library include a Forget-Me-Not Dementia awareness week event, with adults and children planting forget-me-not seeds and decorating plant pots; this was done to show support for those living with dementia. Also an activity and display for National Hedgerow week, visitors enjoyed the colouring sheets, information booklets and bookmarks; younger visitors also had a special storytime and craft session.</p> <p>Brooklands continued working well with its local schools, both in the library and via outreach. An example of this was a Treasure chest gifting visit to Button Lane Primary, 38 children and 15 parents attended the session.</p> <p>Joint working with Dixons Brooklands Academy has increased, with libraries What's On now being included in school bulletins to parents and the library hosting after-school sessions for parents/carers.</p>
<p>Burnage</p>	<p>The Summer Fair was attended by over 300 people, with crafts, clothes, art, jewelry, books, cakes, plant and tombola stalls, face painting and craft activities, and a Ukulele Group entertained everyone.</p> <p>Friends of Burnage Library published their annual survey, highlighting the friendly, helpful, and welcoming service provided by library staff and volunteers. This also showed that people access the library for a wide range of reasons; collecting/returning books, accessing computers and printers, attending activities such as craft, Storytime, and ESOL classes. Comments described it as "a much-needed resource for socialising, keeping warm and improving mental health".</p> <p>Digital Cafe sessions continue, led by an experienced leader and supported by volunteers and Manchester City College students. The cafe helps bridge the digital divide by providing a relaxed drop in space for older people to navigate the online world confidently and safely.</p>
<p>Central Library</p>	<p>Central Library remains a safe, welcoming space at the heart of the city, open to all. We continue to provide free Wi-Fi, public PCs, and essential study areas, offering informal learning opportunities alongside rich cultural experiences. The library also plays an active role in addressing social challenges such as isolation and health inequalities, ensuring it is a place that supports wellbeing and community connection.</p> <p>Central Library offers a diverse and vibrant programme of cultural activities throughout the year. In 2025, the library welcomed over 1.3 million visitors, resulting in it being the most visited public library in the country.</p> <p>Central Library continues to deliver a diverse and vibrant programme of cultural activities throughout the year, reinforcing its role as a welcoming hub for learning, creativity, and community engagement. Partnership working remains central, resulting in events that celebrate reading for pleasure and encourage new audiences to discover everything the library has to offer. Storytime sessions remain a cornerstone of our family offer, including our highly valued Sensory Storytime, designed specifically for children with additional needs. By incorporating multi-sensory elements, these sessions ensure stories are accessible, engaging, and</p>

	<p>inclusive, demonstrating the library’s commitment to removing barriers and fostering a love of reading for every child.</p> <p>Multilingual Storytime sessions—available in English, Mandarin, French, Spanish, Polish, and Ukrainian—further strengthen our community outreach, welcoming families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and creating a strong sense of belonging.</p> <p>In 2025, a new weekly Talk English Circle in partnership with volunteers from Manchester Adult Education Service (MAES). This initiative supports language development and complements our bi-weekly Conversation Club, providing friendly spaces for people to practise English and build confidence.</p> <p>Sunday Funday events—Chinese New Year, Festival of Libraries, Summer &amp; Back to School, and Christmas—continued to attract families through creative activities and crafts. We played a key part in Oasis Week, hosting numerous musical events that included a tribute act, a string quartet and a ukulele group.</p> <p>The library offered free hot drinks for the first time this Winter, as a warm space.</p> <p>The library was closed for 3 weeks in August for a successful WiFi upgrade, during which 1000s of people were still served by a pop-up Visitor Information service in the glazed link.</p> <p>Central Library remains a welcoming, inclusive space at the heart of the city, supporting learning, culture, and community connection.</p>
Chorlton	<p>Chorlton library re-opened after its amazing transformation project in summer 2025, which restored its original heritage features, including uncovering the magnificent dome, as well as creating new meeting rooms and a beautiful new children’s library.</p> <p>The introduction of Open + offers registered customers an additional 19 hours of library use per week.</p> <p>New activities and clubs include Lego club, children’s art club, Children’s book club, Homework club, Chess club and adult craft group. All have been popular and welcomed by our community.</p> <p>Chorlton book festival returned in September to the library, with a brilliant program of authors, poets, history, stories, crafts and even a great bookish bake-off.</p> <p>Black History Month saw a health event aimed at men, but open to al. This went well with lots of health partners joining us, attendees enjoyed sharing a meal together and having the opportunity to talk to lots of health and well-being professionals.</p>
Didsbury	<p>The popular Chess club has a regular group of players and volunteers. It’s intergenerational, so children, young people and adults all get involved.</p> <p>We started a new Reading group with the support of a volunteer, of friendly library users meeting to discuss books with a brew.</p> <p>We have a seeds library and enjoy green activities; we pledge to promote all things green. In August, we had a green Storytime with seed planting, to highlight and encourage environmental literacy.</p> <p>We delivered some great outreach work including several visits to Didsbury Good Neighbours, including art sessions in the park.</p>

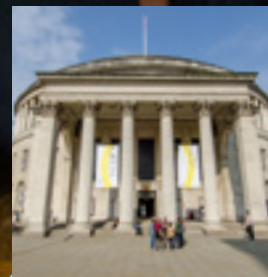
	<p>We deliver a French Storytime as well as a regular weekly Storytime.</p>
Fallowfield	<p>During 2025, there were significant capital works in the Place at Platt Lane to repair the roof, with some new furniture planned for 2026 to uplift the library space.</p> <p>The Lego and Forever Young clubs continue to be busy and popular. The Summer Reading Challenge sessions included a Love Science event, giving children a hands on exciting learning experience with lots of fun. Another popular session was the Odd Socks activity ran by local artist Mandy, with the children designing a sock plant pal that they could grow on at home.</p>
Forum	<p>The Creative Space won several awards during 2025, including the Culture and Creativity Award at the Libraries Connected Award and Best Live Event for the Wythenshawe Live Night at the Manchester Culture Awards. Highlights of the programme being a feature on BBC Radio Manchester. The founders of Liveinshawe discussed the Creative Space helping support local poets, musicians, and artists. 100 people attended our first movie premiere with Top and Tails Production. It was a community-inspired project with an intergenerational focus, even with a red carpet. Our regular Music Evermore sessions continue giving young local people the opportunity to play and learn about music.</p> <p>Forum meeting rooms offer an invaluable resource, with advice and recreational sessions such as CAB, Social Circle and Paint Pots; this enhances the support we offer.</p> <p>The Holiday Activity and Food sessions are delivered with Leisure Services, providing a program of physical and creative activities. We have continued to strengthen our relationship with <b>schools</b> by promoting the library service through visits to both the library and schools.</p> <p>Outreach includes Wythenshawe games, our library stalls delivered crafts, library information, and book gifting over a busy weekend.</p>
Gorton	<p>The Bread and Butter Thing continues to provide a low-cost weekly food shop every Friday, supporting more than 50 local residents.</p> <p>Women's community support groups meet monthly and include Read with Doja, The Inspirational Woman, Mams Aloud, and Esther's Hub.</p> <p>The ICT sessions support around 40 residents per month.</p> <p>The Festival of Libraries: showcased Tai Chi, Chess Club, Storytime, calligraphy, and creative community activities.</p> <p>Sewing Workshops promote sustainable fashion and culminated in a successful fashion show in the Atrium.</p> <p>Families designed a flag to promote green libraries which will feature in a Greater Manchester-wide exhibition later this year.</p> <p>Gorton Library partnered with Care Success Services to deliver a weekly work-experience programme for adults with additional needs</p>
Hulme High Street	<p>The age friendly coffee morning group meets Tuesday 11am – 12pm, and has become a much-needed hub for the over 50's in the community.</p> <p>Talk English sessions on Wednesday mornings for non-English speakers continue to be popular</p>

	<p>The Lego club is also buzzing with excitement, enthusiasm, and creativity e</p> <p>The weekly Hello Saturday session continues to grow each week.</p>
Longsight	<p>Longsight Library remains at the heart of the community, working closely with partners such as Manchester Adult Education (MAES), Asian Careers, Citizens Advice Manchester (CAM), Olympians Music Foundation (OMF), and many others within the Longsight area.</p> <p>We have delivered and supported a wide range of family and children’s activities. Including school visits, Lego Club, Story Sessions, Poetry Sessions, and HAF programs</p> <p>Our Age-Friendly Coffee Morning group for over 50s continues to be actively involved in library projects. In addition, our IT volunteers have supported the community by delivering basic IT sessions.</p> <p>On Wednesday, 3rd December 2025, Rusholme and Didsbury Jobcentre hosted a Volunteering Job Fair at Longsight Library. The event brought together local volunteering organizations, including Oxfam, Mustard Tree, and MCR VIP, to showcase opportunities for job seekers.</p>
Miles Platting	<p>In conjunction with Jigsaw Housing, library staff offer four fun days throughout the year for the local residents providing activities, food and drink. In what is becoming a regular feature at Christmas, the real-life reindeer are a big hit.</p> <p>In partnership with the Canal &amp; River Trust, we offer a bike loan library on the last Saturday of every month. Fully maintained bikes of all sizes are loaned out free of charge to anybody who may need one. This has proved very popular with local mums and dads who do not have a bike of their own, but their children do so this means they can all go out together on a bike ride.</p>
Moss Side Powerhouse	<p>Powerhouse Library continues to be a vibrant community hub for local families with activities taking place every evening.</p> <p>We remain committed to supporting the local community and have been offering two Talk English clubs a week since September 2025. These are run in partnership with MAES and very well attended.</p> <p>Other community offers include an ESOL/IT drop in for women delivered by Community Advice Link, an over-50s social group, a coffee morning, and a job club. One thing we could not do without is our volunteers. They help us deliver clubs for children and young people every day. There are about 15 people a week who give their time and expertise to help local children with their homework, practice chess, and hone their craft skills.</p>
New Moston	<p>Libraries worked in partnership with Rizwan Iqbal who created the Up North project, a portrait photography project for the people of North Manchester. People from all backgrounds aged 18+ were invited to ‘Up North’. This photography project aims to collect local portraits exclusively from diverse communities across North Manchester along with images of some of their personal objects, heirlooms and stories putting North Manchester on the map of art, culture and community. One of the images is of loyal customer Dennis Houghton, an extraordinary individual who has loved, lost and stands a proud North Manchester resident. He is 83 years old with an extremely sharp memory of life in North Manchester. He was a ballroom dancer and is still an artist and writer with some of his artwork on display in the library.</p>

<p>Newton Heath</p>	<p>Newton Heath Library was refurbished at the end of 2025, with excellent feedback from customers.</p> <p>The library is used by a number of partner organisations, all of whom offer services to local residents. Housing Solutions have begun running a session at the library. The library is a great example of a community hub that improves the lives of local residents.</p> <p>Library staff have attended several engagement events in parks this year including a cold and rainy day at Brookdale Park in Newton Heath to celebrate the Christmas season. Families visited Father Christmas in his grotto, receiving a book from Read Manchester and a selection box. Everyone enjoyed free hot drinks and pies together (both savoury and mince pies!) alongside the festive craft activities, lovely stalls with lots of freebies and even the chance to feed a reindeer! Library staff ran a festive craft activity, and the atmosphere was full of fun and cheer.</p>
<p>North City Library</p>	<p>North City Library turned 20 in January 2026, and celebrated with a week of fun packed events for our customers, including a silent disco, author talks and a fun nature walk to Boggart Hole Clough with RSPB.</p> <p>A new meeting pod was installed during the year to facilitate community group meetings and activities.</p> <p>Libraries are involved in the successful Harpurhey Together project, which included a parade from the leisure centre to Queens Park, stalls, activities such as a climbing wall, facepainting and free food and ice cream. Customers created a banner in a workshop at the library, which was displayed as part of the parade</p>
<p>Northenden</p>	<p>Age Friendly Coffee Afternoons continues to be a highlight, well attended, and well-loved. Described by one user as the 'friendliest little library in Manchester' - the Age Friendly Coffee Afternoon is a huge part of that warmth and accessibility.</p> <p>Connectivity and IT reliability have been improved with help from the digital inclusion team.</p> <p>We had a junk-bug summer activity that inspired creativity and demonstrated the importance of eco-friendly activities. All through the summer holidays, crafts and colouring were available in the library, with over 110 customers taking part in our summer crafts.</p>
<p>Withington</p>	<p>For South Asian Heritage Month, we had a fantastic celebration event, the event was a collaboration between Manchester Libraries and Saheli Manchester. It was a day of workshops, experiences and South Asian food and drink. The day went well and was enjoyed by all. Another highlight was the launch of the new weekly GCSE Book Club, it's for GCSE students to come, read and discuss their set texts in an informal environment, it got off to a great start with many students attending and giving positive feedback.</p> <p>In summer we delivered HAF. We ran three sessions per week for four weeks, the sessions were all well attended and gave the children a mix of creative activities to do as well as enjoying a meal together.</p> <p>The library continues to host and help The Bread and Butter Thing, set up to offer affordable good quality food, it is super busy each week. It runs on the power of volunteers, so it's great that the library can advertise and register new volunteers.</p>
<p>HMP Manchester Prison Library</p>	<p>The library continues to host regular chess groups, creative writing and the other activities.</p> <p>A new focus of work has been on a specific group within the prison – the isolators. These are a group of people who do not engage with the prison regime, stay isolated in their cells and have very little contact with other prisoners or the staff.</p>

	<p>We have added a weekly visit to the wing library rota to ensure that this group of people had the opportunity to have contact with the library. On average there are around 20 men who isolate, these men now receive a weekly visit from the library officer sharing the ways in which the library could be helpful to them. We have on average 6 requests from the isolators per week, for books, magazines, prison/law information. This work has been recognised within the prison by the Governor</p>
Books To Go	<p>We are looking at increasing the number of routes across the city to 30 as some areas such as North Manchester have increased in numbers dramatically.</p> <p>We have continued to support the reading schemes set up last year and are also in the process of supporting a new reading group within another residential facility.</p> <p>We have purchased several CD players for our blind and partially sighted residents to loan and also use as replacements of broken equipment. These were previously loaned to them by British wireless for the blind charity, who sadly no longer supply CD players. Audio books on CD are very popular with our service users and by having a supply of sets this means our residents can carry on listening to a choice of books.</p> <p>Books to go have attended winter warmer events and gifted the winter warmer bags to 25 of our most vulnerable service users within the Wythenshawe area.</p> <p>The Books to go flyers have been included in hospital discharge packs from the AU ward at north Manchester hospital.</p> <p>We are now working in partnership with the district nurses based at Victoria Mill in North Manchester. They now have a supply of our updated flyers and are very supportive of the home delivery service.</p>

# OUR VISION FOR Manchester Libraries 2023



The possibilities are endless  
[manchester.gov.uk/libraries](https://manchester.gov.uk/libraries)

# Manchester Libraries

the beating heart of our communities

Manchester Libraries and Archives Service deliver leisure, cultural, learning and information services through a network of neighbourhood libraries, community partnership libraries and the internationally renowned, world-class Central Library – one of the most visited public libraries in the country – HMP Manchester Prison library and Books to Go for housebound people.

People are at the heart of everything at Manchester Libraries. Each library helps to make its neighbourhood a vibrant place and serves the whole community, offering a warm welcome to all. Our high-quality buildings have received investment of several million pounds in recent years and are high-quality buildings that enable a fantastic service to be delivered.

We want everyone to get the most from our libraries. In recent months people have been facing a cost-of-living crisis that will last for months and possibly years to come. Libraries are helping Manchester residents more than ever. They provide welcoming spaces that improve people's lives by offering a free service for all in the community, as well as a warm welcome, support and resources. We have recently abolished fines for late returned books.

## There are so many reasons to use libraries, including:

- A vibrant, exciting and diverse events programme for all ages
- Book stock that promotes reading for pleasure and literacy
- High-quality Internet, Wi-Fi and printing at each library
- A skilled workforce, dedicated to offering an excellent service to customers.

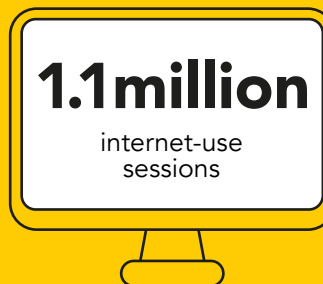
## Manchester Libraries in 2022



**2.2million**  
visits to libraries



**1.6million**  
books issued



**1.1million**  
internet-use  
sessions



**2million**  
social media views



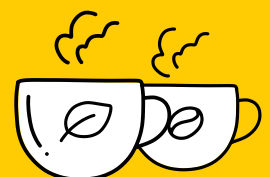
**772,000**  
e-books and  
audiobooks issued



**114,000**  
books gifted via  
Read Manchester



**143,000**  
event attendees



**20,000**  
free hot drinks with our  
warm spaces offer



*The library is a place of refuge to me – a world of knowledge, with the latest books to read and fantastic events.*

*Forum Library customer*



# Our priorities for the next five years

## Our Manchester, Our People

Our libraries will continue to focus on people, helping to make our neighbourhoods great places to live and Manchester a world-class city.

### We will:

- Be neighbourhood venues where local residents are welcome, can talk to people and be helped by skilled hospitable staff
- Provide a warm welcome to all, helping people to live side by side, and be Libraries of Sanctuary
- Be fully accessible, increase opening hours through Open+, and deliver books to people who are housebound
- Support people's skills and job prospects
- Increase engagement with young people
- Support local businesses and start-ups through the BIPC and other projects
- Implement the Green Libraries Manifesto, contributing to Zero Carbon
- Continue to invest in high-quality buildings – refurbishing libraries and outreach venues
- Support safer and stronger communities and thriving neighbourhoods
- Tackle poverty and social exclusion, combating disadvantage.

## Literacy and reading

Reading remains at the core of our library service. Literacy is key to life chances.

### We will:

- Run Read Manchester as a National Literacy Trust Hub
- Provide access to books for all ages, in all formats, including ebooks and books in different languages
- Ensure that libraries and archives stock represents our diverse communities
- Run Storytimes in every library
- Manage Bookstart
- Engage with schools, running class visits
- Run the Summer Reading Challenge
- Gift thousands of books to children
- Support book clubs
- Host book festivals, eg. Chorlton Book Festival, Manchester Literature Festival
- Work with the Shannon Trust to improve prisoners' literacy
- Work in partnership with Read Easy, improving residents' literacy.

## Digital inclusion

Our libraries provide free, high-quality access to Wi-Fi and the internet, and help residents with their skills and confidence.

### We will:

- Provide drop-in and structured learning and skills sessions
- Support residents with specific initiatives, eg. parking permits, voter ID
- Provide higher-level skills sessions through the Business and IP Centre
- Seek opportunities to provide free data and devices for residents
- Continue to provide and improve services and resources online that are available 24/7.



*The library stops time and noise, broadens my mind, and it makes me explore and discover new things. It excites my little boy and he feels happy. I love my library because it's always there.*

*Central Library customer*

## Culture and creativity

Our libraries are neighbourhood cultural and creative spaces where people can enjoy creative activities and events on their doorstep.

### We will:

- Programme vibrant, diverse and exciting events, accessible to all ages, including International Mother Language Day, Festival of Libraries and Fun Palaces.
- Encourage and foster creativity and participation for all ages
- Widen access and opportunities by partnering flagship organisations, such as Factory International, HOME, and Royal Exchange Theatre
- Run Holiday Activity Fund sessions
- Host exhibitions
- Bring archives and local history to neighbourhood libraries and Central Library
- Present Library Live, Central Library's cultural and creative programme.

## Health and wellbeing

Using our libraries makes people feel better.

### We will:

- Encourage people to use our safe, warm, free spaces, helping to reduce loneliness and make people feel better
- Be Age Friendly libraries
- Run social clubs, reading groups, coffee mornings
- Provide access to health information in the library and online and through signposting
- Provide and promote health books and books that improve wellbeing
- Host organisations that support people's health
- Increase the number of volunteers
- Be a trusted ear to residents
- Increase people's pride in their local area through archives and local history.

*My library means a lot to me and my son. It increases our knowledge and widens our imagination, takes us to places we've never been, and allows us to experience things we may never do in everyday life. It's imperative that every area and every person has access to a library.*

*Newton Heath Library  
customer*





“Manchester Libraries are extremely popular, well-used and well-loved, and we take pride in helping to make people’s lives better. We will continue to improve our services in the future, including our online resources.”

Councillor John Hacking – Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure, and  
Councillor Adele Douglas – Deputy Executive Member for Skills, Employment and Leisure

If you have any questions about this vision, or any of its contents, or want to make suggestions or comments on how we can improve further, email [libraries@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:libraries@manchester.gov.uk)



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

## Appendix 4: Manchester Libraries Vision 2023-28 Progress document

This document shows the progress with actions listed in the Libraries Vision document in 2025

### 1. Our Manchester, Our People

Our libraries will continue to focus on people, helping to make our neighbourhoods great places to live and Manchester a world-class city. We will

No.	Action	Progress in 2025
1.1	Be neighbourhood venues where local residents are welcome, can talk to people and be helped by skilled hospitable staff	Support to use computers, free Internet and Wi-Fi, a wide range of books to borrow, place to relax and meet people, offering a wide range of events for all ages. Somewhere to study and get help with homework. All libraries are increasingly being used as community hubs by a range of other organisations to deliver services that benefit the community
1.2	Provide a warm welcome to all, helping people to live side by side, and be Libraries of Sanctuary	Warm Spaces, including free hot drinks in all libraries, were delivered from Oct 25-Feb 26. We are accredited Libraries of Sanctuary, and play a crucial role in delivering Manchester's Local Authority of Sanctuary. This includes events for refugee week, and delivery of dozens of devices to community groups who support Sanctuary Seekers.
1.3	Be fully accessible, increase opening hours through Open+, and deliver books to people who are housebound	Chorlton Library Introduced Open + in October 25 extending the opening hours by 19 hours per week.  525 residents with mobility difficulties currently receive library books through the Books To Go service
1.4	Support people's skills and job prospects	Libraries hosted a range of events across the city from learning providers – during Festival of Libraries in June and Get the Nation Learning Week in November. Events were particularly well attended in Forum Library, Gorton Library and Newton Heath Library.  Four Libraries are co-located with MAES – Avenue Library, Gorton Library, Longsight Library and most recently Newton Heath Library.  The number of volunteers in libraries increased this year, and were celebrated at a library volunteers event during Volunteer Week in June – many of the volunteers are working age.
1.5	Increase engagement with young people	This year we have developed and introduced Youth Friendly Library standards, in consultation with young people. The consultation had 279 responses 59% had used a library in the last year 9% had never used a library 73% found their library to be a welcoming space The consultation highlighted the most important issues that young people wanted taken into consideration when providing a library service for them. These main points are now being ratified by the Youth Council as our Youth Friendly Standards. We have also managed a project with the Youth Engagement Network project. Working with an under-represented group –

		<p>young carers from St Peter's High School, they looked at what works for young people in libraries and what doesn't. This will be followed up by a celebration event in Longsight Library and visits to John Rylands and Central Library.</p>
1.6	<p>Support local businesses and start-ups through the BIPC and other projects</p>	<p>The Business &amp; IP Centre (BIPC), Build A Business programme, and Generator enterprise hubs each play a distinct role in supporting entrepreneurs, working together to guide individuals from their initial idea through to early trading. This ecosystem creates a connected, supportive network of spaces, guidance, and resources that helps entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey - an approach widely admired across the BIPC National Network.</p> <p>"Manchester offers the best support for start-ups in the world!" Ricky Leung, global food trader and restaurateur, &amp; Build A Business client</p>
1.7	<p>Implement the Green Libraries Manifesto, contributing to Zero Carbon</p>	<p>We have received £10k to deliver the Culture Nature project in 2025 which created seed libraries and facilitated nature walks in Summer 2025.</p> <p>We are part of the GM Flying a Flag for Green Libraries project with workshops at Gorton Library.</p> <p>Each library now offers paper and card recycling for customers.</p>
1.8	<p>Continue to invest in high-quality buildings refurbishing libraries and outreach venues</p>	<p>Chorlton Library has been fully refurbished, with work being completed in July 2025. The works include remodelling and refurbishment of the 1970's extension area, restoration of the historic dome, a new community meeting room and interview rooms, full redecoration, and the introduction of the Open Plus access system.</p> <p>All libraries are high-quality buildings from which we're able to offer high quality services.</p>
1.9	<p>Support safer and stronger communities and thriving neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Libraries are at the heart of our communities and offer a wide range of services and activities for free that help to build and maintain community cohesion and pride in place – this has been more important than ever in response to the summer riots of 2024, and increasing divisions in society. Manchester's libraries are used by all sectors of society who use the spaces and services side-by-side. This has been underlined by the Libraries of Sanctuary initiative. Originally becoming Libraries of Sanctuary in 2021, we reaccredited in 2024, demonstrating how libraries offer a warm welcome to asylum seekers and refugees. Manchester Libraries are twinned with Lviv Regional Youth Library in Lviv and the Sunflower of Dreams exhibition and workshops in Central Library are part of this initiative.</p> <p>Empathy Lab project is working with 10 Manchester schools (including 2 high schools) to train teachers and embed empathy through books.</p>
1.10	<p>Tackle poverty and social exclusion, combating disadvantage</p>	<p>Our libraries are now food collection points, for their local foodbank.</p> <p>The Bread &amp; Butter Thing operate from 3 libraries.</p> <p>All libraries are warm spaces, with each library offering free hot drinks from October 2025 – February 2026</p>

## 2. Literacy and Reading

Reading remains at the core of our library service. Literacy is key to life chances. We will:

No.	Action	Progress in 2025
2.1	Run Read Manchester as a National Literacy Trust Hub	<p>Read Manchester is now coming up to its tenth birthday in 2026, and we continue to devise new campaigns and embed National Literacy Trust offers. Highlights this year include our See Myself in Books Festival, Take 10 events and non-fiction November.</p> <p>2026 will be the National Year of Reading, and the profile of reading and literacy will be promoted nationally.</p>
2.2	Provide access to books for all ages, in all formats, including ebooks and books in different languages	<p>Total items borrowed in 2025 is 1.6 million – an increase on 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 229k Adult fiction books</li> <li>• 159k Adult non-fiction books</li> <li>• 352k Children’s books</li> <li>• 111k Ebooks</li> <li>• 185k Eaudio books</li> <li>• 583k Emagazines &amp; Enewspapers</li> </ul>
2.3	Ensure that libraries and archives stock represents our diverse communities	<p>See Myself in Books programme for schools – collections of 25 books around ethnic diversity and neurodiversity, plus a programme of author visits and a festival held in March 2025, and will run again on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026.</p> <p>We have introduced community language collections to our ebook service, with the top 10 languages spoken in Manchester</p> <p>The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People are an Archives+ partner based at Central Library. Their current project aims to connect disabled people to their heritage, as well as to promote the existence of the Disabled People’s Archive</p>
2.4	Run Storytimes in every library	<p>Storytimes run in all libraries, mainly staff-run, some with volunteers.</p> <p>At Central Library, storytimes are now run in 7 languages</p>
2.5	Manage Bookstart	<p>£300k worth of books delivered across the different stages of Bookstart.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baby packs - 6750</li> <li>• Toddler program packs – 1834</li> <li>• Preschool packs – 6566</li> </ul> <p>Plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual Language – 1932</li> <li>• Packs for children with additional needs – 265</li> </ul>
2.6	Engage with schools, running class visits	<p>Sept 2024 – July 2025 academic year – 153 schools engaged (73% of the total schools). Almost 60,000 children attended 1,666 sessions.</p> <p>Read Manchester gave 29,000 new books to schools via transition reads, and other book gifting programmes.</p>
2.7	Run the Summer Reading Challenge	<p>In 2025 we did not run the pilot scheme, but still saw an overall increase in the number of books read to 25,112. There were</p>

		3224 joiners, 1941 completers. We also worked with HAF groups to introduce the SRC to groups of children who would never normally participate – 600 children , who were each gifted a book to keep.
2.8	Gift thousands of books to children	Almost 65,000 books gifted to Manchester residents, schools and community groups, valued at nearly £400k. These resources are received by us for free – mostly from publishers who support our literacy hub, Read Manchester. Book gifting campaigns and activity promote engagement with libraries and library membership.
2.9	Support book clubs	We currently support over 30 book groups across the city, most of which take place in non-library venues  HMP Manchester library currently have 3 book clubs running & more planned for 2025. This includes a virtual whole prison read.
2.10	Host regular author events, book festivals, e.g. Chorlton Book Festival, Manchester Literature Festival	There were 302,000 attendees of events in 2025 – an increase in 50% from 2024. Major book festivals supported, including Manchester Literature Festival, Chorlton Book Festival and the Festival of Libraries.
2.11	Work with the Shannon Trust to improve prisoners' literacy	Unfortunately, the Shannon Trust is no longer able to operate in HMP Manchester. We have developed another initiative to support prisoners' literacy – the introduction of Reading Liaison leads on the wings. The library works closely with these leads, who are prison officers, created a role profile for them and offers training on how to develop interest in reading. The library and the education department work closely together to ensure that the men with low reading levels are picked up through screening and encouraged to take part in the reading groups across the prison. The library is supporting all reading groups by ensuring that interesting and relevant material is available able to offer support when needed.
2.12	Work in partnership with Read Easy, improving residents' literacy	Read Easy promoted at all libraries and sessions run at Forum Library and Withington Library

### 3. Digital inclusion

Our libraries provide free, high-quality access to Wi-Fi and the internet, and help residents with their skills and confidence. We will:

No.	Action	Progress in 2025
3.1	Provide drop-in and structured learning and skills sessions	Each library has at least one session per week where extra support is given. The drop-in sessions utilise Learn My Way, a free online learning platform where residents can gain digital skills. Learning sessions were provided, via the City of Learning, during Festival of Libraries and Get the Nation Learning week

3.2	Support residents with specific initiatives, eg.. parking permits, voter ID	Library staff support residents online – both in libraries and with text support via the digital inclusion team. Initiatives this year include the PSTN switchover and ongoing support with downloading the NHS app. The Digital Health Hubs have expanded to multiple parts of the city
3.3	Provide higher-level skills sessions through the Business and IP Centre	Start-up businesses supported in the BIPC and through the new Generator space.
3.4	Seek opportunities to provide free data and devices for residents	Over 9000 free sim cards distributed in libraries, 180 smartphones, 340 laptops and 26 desktops gifted to residents through a range of social value initiatives. More devices have been secured to be distributed in coming months
3.5	Continue to provide & improve services & resources online that are available 24/7	Use of Ebooks, Eaudio, Emagazines and Enewspapers increase considerably, now accounting for over 40% of the loans from Manchester Libraries.

#### 4. Culture and creativity

Our libraries are neighbourhood cultural and creative spaces where people can enjoy creative activities and events on their doorstep. We will:

No.	Action	Progress in 2025
4.1	Programme vibrant, diverse and exciting events, accessible to all ages, including International Mother Language Day, Festival of Libraries and Fun Palaces	In total 302k people attended events/activities and creative opportunities. This is an increase of 50% on the previous 12 months. Major festivals were hosted and delivered including International Mother Language Day, Festival of Libraries and Fun Palaces, Chorlton Library, LiveInShawe and See Myself in Books festival.
4.2	Encourage and foster creativity and participation for all ages	A full, regular programme of creativity took place across libraries providing social, fun and learning activities. This has increased massively in Wythenshawe Library with the development of the programme at the Creative Space on the first floor of the library.
4.3	Widen access and opportunities by partnering flagship organisations, such as Factory International, HOME, and Royal Exchange Theatre	Manchester Libraries are a vital part of the city's cultural and creative infrastructure, often providing access to resident's first cultural experience and access to flagship organisations. Libraries are the most visited cultural venue in the city.
4.4	Run Holiday Activity Fund sessions	Well-attended HAF sessions offering a range of creative activities and a packed lunch were held in 6 libraries during Easter, Summer and Christmas holidays. The sessions take place at Abraham Moss Library, Gorton Library, Longsight Library, Newton Heath Library, Withington Library, Wythenshawe Forum Library (joint with leisure).
4.5	Host exhibitions	A highlight of exhibitions this year at Central Library has been artwork from children in Lviv, Ukraine, reflecting on the war. This has been displayed next to art and poems reflecting on the art, from Manchester schoolchildren that were generated

		in workshops at Central Library. This has been a particularly rich year for Archives+ exhibitions, Highlights have included Piccadilly Radio archives exhibition, the George House Trust exhibition, the LGBT Foundation archives exhibition, Remembering Oxford Mills, Architecture for the People, Manchester City Architect's Department 1902-2003 and <a href="#">Libraries 175: Celebrating 175 years of the Public Libraries Act 1850</a> which was produced by Manchester Archives. The most recent exhibition is the acclaimed Manchester-based Lipservice Theatre company. Exhibitions in the new creative space at Forum Library including celebration of the NHS
4.6	Bring archives and local history to neighbourhood libraries and Central Library	Archives+ continuing existing to increase heritage engagement and events across libraries including Gorton, Chorlton and Abraham Moss. The family history society toured around 10 libraries in August, whilst Central Library was closed for the WiFi upgrade. An audio visual kiosk has been installed in the newly
4.7	Present Library Live, Central Library's cultural and creative programme	An extensive, vibrant diverse programme has taken place, listed in more detail in appendix 6. Highlights of this year include Chinese New Year celebrations on Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February, Black British Book Festival, Love Festival and the Festival of Libraries.

## 5. Health and wellbeing

Using our libraries makes people feel better. We will:

No.	Action	Progress in 2025
5.1	Encourage people to use our safe, warm, free spaces, helping to reduce loneliness and make people feel better	Libraries are a place to relax and meet people, offering a wide range of events for all ages. All Libraries registered as warm spaces, offering free hot drinks from October 2025 – Feb 2026.
5.2	Be Age Friendly libraries	Manchester Libraries are Age Friendly Libraries, offering a variety of activities and social groups. All libraries also offer an Age Friendly Hour drop-in session once a week.
5.3	Run social clubs, reading groups, coffee mornings	Wide variety of clubs for all ages held in libraries across the city, including storytimes, knit and natter, crochet groups, the new Cosy Reading group at Central Library and age-friendly sessions in each library.
5.4	Provide access to health information in the library and online and through signposting	Health information provided, both in the library and via the Manchester City Council website. Increasing number of partnerships developed, and sessions delivered and promoted in libraries
5.5	Provide and promote health books and books that improve wellbeing	Reading for 10 minutes a day is proved to improve wellbeing – the annual Take 10 initiative promotes this, and is now a major National Year of Reading event. Health books and wellbeing books promoted in libraries, including the Reading Well collections.
5.6	Host organisations that support people's health	Approximately 180 hours of health and wellbeing sessions per month are delivered across libraries. There is a wide range of health activities delivered such as Be Well sessions, diabetic workshops, Staying Well this Winter events, armchair

		exercise sessions, flu vaccination sessions, blood pressure checks, dementia carer cafes and Macmillan advice sessions
5.7	Increase the number of volunteers	<p>Volunteers support a range of services including storytimes, craft sessions, literacy champions, digital champions, Family History helpdesk and Friends of Libraries.</p> <p>227 Volunteers provided 24,500 hours of volunteering over the last 12 months. An increase of 17% compared to the previous year</p>
5.8	Be a trusted ear to residents	All libraries act as community hub with staff and volunteers ensuring a warm welcome in libraries.
5.9	Increase people's pride in their local area through archives and local history	<p>Archives+ continuing existing to increase heritage engagement and events across libraries including Gorton, Chorlton and Abraham Moss. The family history society toured around 10 libraries in August, whilst Central Library was closed for the WiFi upgrade.</p> <p>An audio visual kiosk has been installed in the newly refurbished Chorlton Library.</p> <p>The Marcus Rashford Wall of Hope Archives learning resource promotes themes of anti-racism and community spirit, and will be used in local schools as well as by the general public</p>

# READING OFFER: READING WITHOUT LIMITS



## Choice and Freedom

Embraces and values reading in all its forms, without judgement, promoting individual choice

## Wellbeing and Connection

Recognises the power of reading for pleasure to improve wellbeing, to increase social connection

**Public libraries**  
Create excitement about reading which has the power to positively transform people's lives.

## Expanding Horizons

Demonstrates how reading unlocks opportunity and fosters critical thinking, expanding horizons

## Empathy and Understanding

Enables exploration of the rich diversity of heritage and culture to build empathy and understanding



**Libraries  
Connected**

## Service offer

- ◆ A wide-ranging relevant book collection, in accessible formats, which surprises and enriches
- ◆ Vibrant reading events across the year, that bring together communities of readers
- ◆ Focus on people who are less engaged with reading and validate non-traditional forms of reading
- ◆ Outreach and targeted partnership work including national reading promotions and prizes
- ◆ Promote diverse authors and publishers as standard
- ◆ Skilled and knowledgeable staff

# CULTURE AND CREATIVITY OFFER: CELEBRATING COMMUNITIES



## Inspiring Opportunities

Giving communities access to inspiring, high quality cultural events and activities

## Cultural Partnerships

Actively engage with national and local partners, stimulating new ideas and curiosity



## Creativity and Talent

Opportunities to explore and unlock individual creativity and identity

## Celebrating Diversity

Foster understanding and celebration of diverse heritage and cultures within our communities



**Libraries  
Connected**

## Service offer

- ◆ Utilising our spaces creatively to host a wide range of cultural events, activities and exhibitions to support self expression and cultural enrichment.
- ◆ Improve social connection, build confidence, self-esteem and help people to achieve their potential and enjoy creativity.
- ◆ Enhancing the range and quality of services
- ◆ Supporting creative practitioners and the cultural economy
- ◆ Developing staff skills around programming, fundraising and marketing

# INFORMATION AND DIGITAL OFFER: EMBRACING POSSIBILITIES



## Digital Inclusion

Access to physical and digital resources proactively increasing the reach of digital services and support to local communities

## Information and Digital Literacy

Information and digital literacy, to aid informed decision-making

## Public libraries

Ensure communities can access quality information and digital services, learn new digital skills and be safe online, supported by trained staff and volunteers, by removing barriers and enabling people to participate.

## Social Connection

Improved social connection and prevention of isolation through trusted, welcoming physical and digital spaces

## Developing Skills

Providing opportunities for communities to develop their digital skills to create, explore and learn



## Service offer

- ◆ The infrastructure of accessible computer equipment, wi-fi and information resources.
- ◆ Improve digital inclusion, highlighting opportunities for engagement and strategies for online safety and ensure citizens have the access they need.
- ◆ Aiding development of information and digital literacy skills to aid informed decision making, and combat misinformation .
- ◆ To innovate and upskill people in developing technologies.
- ◆ For networking and co-creation in continuous development.

# HEALTH OFFER: HEALTHIER HAPPIER PEOPLE



## Innovative Services

Providing innovative services in trusted, welcoming spaces that widen access and awareness

## Partnership Expertise

Securing partner expertise to enhance the range and quality of services

## Public libraries

Support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through activities which help tackle health inequalities

## Awareness of health priorities

Engaged staff aware of the health and wellbeing priorities of their communities and prevention strategies

## Informed Choices

Physical and digital information to support informed decision making and choice



## Service offer

- ◆ Health information, interventions and support to build health literacy and awareness, and signposting to relevant services and support
- ◆ Services designed to improve social connection and prevent isolation, build confidence, self-esteem, resilience and help people achieve their potentials, and creative and volunteering opportunities.
- ◆ Participation in evidence based national health and wellbeing programmes
- ◆ Partnership initiatives targeting explicit health priorities

THE  
**READING**  
AGENCY

## **Scrutiny 2025- Children's and Read Manchester**

### **Libraries' engagement with children, young people and schools, and the Read Manchester Literacy Hub**

#### **Bookstart and Early Years**

Our library offer starts with the very youngest children, and the offer of regular storytime activities across our libraries. We also deliver the Bookstart programme and work closely with Early Years colleagues on the Start Well Board and in Sure Start Children's Centres to deliver programmes and books to target families for literacy support. Through our Read Manchester hub we have extensive expertise and community reach through our Early Years Literacy Champions and have also supported a targeted offer around Early Words Matter, which is being delivered via the National Literacy Trust in the Gorton and Abbey Hey ward.

Manchester Libraries and BookTrust continue to gift book packs to babies and 3-4 year olds every year to encourage family reading and an early and enduring love of books. The Manchester Libraries' partnership with Booktrust is hugely successful and has been running for over 25 years now. The baby pack goes to every baby in the city via the Registrars, whilst the Toddler and Preschooler are targeted via the Early Years partners. In 2025 we delivered over 17,000 Bookstart Baby, Toddler, Preschooler, Additional Needs packs and resources to families across the city, including nearly 2000 dual language books, increasing accessibility to reading for our diverse population. Total numbers distributed were as follows:

- **Baby packs - 6750**
  - **Toddler packs – 1834**
  - **Preschool packs – 6566**
- Plus
- **Dual Language – 1932**
  - **Packs for children with additional needs – 265**

Central Library and Manchester Art Gallery were the venue for the launch of Baby Week on 16 June. Sessions included Artful Playground, story sessions and our regular storytimes. We gave away over 300 board books plus over 600 other resources, including reading calendars and booklets, plus engaged with hundreds of families, making them aware of the importance of early literacy and encouraging membership of Manchester Libraries.

## School engagement

Engagement with schools has continued to grow. During the academic year September 2024 to July 2025, 153 schools engaged with libraries (73% of total schools). There were 62,755 children attending 1,686 sessions including class visits (in-person and virtual) in the academic year 2024/25. Read Manchester's book gifting programme supported schools and pupils by giving them 29,000 brand new books as part of their transition read and other book gifting programmes.

We have a regular programme of children's author, illustrator and poetry events which are free to schools, and we link into to all major national literacy campaigns. This includes the Summer Reading Challenge, World Book Day and Empathy Day, as well as National Storytelling Week and local literacy events including the Festival of Libraries and Chorlton Book Festival Festival.

Libraries are integral to the cultural offer of the city, and this includes our involvement in the Big Imaginations network, which brings high quality theatre and performance for our younger audiences into our libraries and arts venues. We held five Big Imaginations performance events across the year, for a variety of ages and audiences.

The Summer Reading Challenge supports 4-11 year olds to continue reading over the summer holidays and avoid the literacy slide that can occur during the break from school. This year we didn't automatically enrol any schools, so the overall number of 3,224 joiners was down on last year's total. However, the number of children completing the challenge (reading six books or more) increased to 1,941, a total of 60% completing. The overall number of books read also increased to 25,112 and 86% joiners borrowed at least one item. Library staff worked hard to encourage children to keep on reading, and we also held a prize draw for schools where 10% or more of pupils had completed the Challenge. This helped to boost the numbers of children continuing to read across the holiday. Competitions helped [increase numbers participating](#) too. Children under four are also encouraged to join a mini-challenge and these figures are included in the above statistics.

We also worked with an additional 600 children as we were successful in being awarded funding from the Julia Rausing Trust, in a cross-authority outreach project from The Reading Agency, and decided to work with 12 HAF Providers. This proved really beneficial as we were able to work with groups of children who, for the most part, were not regular library users or aware of the Summer Reading Challenge, and also gave each child a book.

## Youth

The main HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme has once again been rolled out across Manchester Libraries. These sessions are targeted at children 11-15, eligible for free school meals. In total, 93 sessions were held during Easter, summer and Christmas with a variety of crafts and events, from Aztec arts to robotics.

This year we have extended our focus on youth and completed our consultation around youth voice, encouraging young people to help us develop youth library standards. Young people from the Youth Forums and Young Carers have been actively inputting into our future plans for libraries and programming. Over 280 young people aged 11 – 18 took part, including 25% who had never used a public library and 77% who hadn't visited a public library in over a year. As well as finding out why they did, or didn't, visit the library and what might encourage them to visit, we also wanted to know what was important to them, with free books, access to computers and a welcoming comfortable space to meet topping the list. Students from St Peter's RC High School in Longsight have taken part in the consultation in a more in-depth way. The students are part of our Libraries Rising, Youth Engagement Network and are currently co-creating a 'Manchester Activity Day' session at Longsight Library in March 2026.

Our youth [author offer](#) has been extensive across the year, including Black History Month with the first of two sessions hosted by book blogger Shelley Fleuridor. The *Forged in Stories* sessions saw Shelley donate 45 beautiful copies of *Forged by Blood* by Ehigbor Okosun and leading engaging sessions with year 10 students from Trinity High School and Chorlton High School.

In November we were joined by Manchester author Danielle Jawando. Danielle's sessions gave young people an important insight into the life of a writer, and the lack of representation in books. Danielle visited Abraham Moss Library to speak to students from Abraham Moss High school and visited Dean Trust Ardwick and Cedar Mount High Schools.



*Pupils from Trinity High School*

Author visits from Kate S. Martin and Tia Fisher explored some of the issues facing young people today in their books based around bullying and gang violence, interlinked with questions that put the students into the shoes of the characters.

## **Read Manchester**

For the last nine years Libraries and Education have worked together to support literacy and reading for pleasure through the Read Manchester campaign, a partnership between Manchester City Council and the National Literacy Trust. The aim is to improve literacy, wellbeing and life skills, leading to improved health, educational attainment and jobs. This works together with our library offer and spans all age groups from storytimes for babies and young children to our offer for young people in high schools, introducing them to new authors and genres of books to encourage them to become lifelong readers.

Some of our main campaigns are detailed below.

## **Empathy**

A focus on empathy has been a continued strand of our work. Read Manchester has recruited ten schools (eight primary and two high schools) to participate in Empathy Lab's Affiliate School programme to embed empathy across the school using books. Each school received a free Empathy book collection and two training days plus extensive resources to use in school, as well as support to create a whole-school action plan. These schools were identified as being in areas where there had been recent unrest and where these skills would be particularly valuable. Their work and support will continue into 2026.

## **See Myself in Books**

In March 2025, Read Manchester held its inaugural [See Myself in Books Festival](#) to promote representation in children's books, featuring an event with top children's authors at the Stoller Hall and an audience of 350 local schoolchildren, as well as a musical performance to welcome pupils to this cultural venue. Devised to complement our neurodiverse and ethnically diverse book [collections](#), 15 diverse authors and illustrators met children in libraries, schools and at the National Football Museum and Stoller Hall during the two-week festival.

The Stoller Hall event on March 18 featured author Maisie Chan and author and illustrator Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola who entertained 350 children from seven primary schools, with UK Comics Laureate Bobby Joseph acting as compere. Pupils from Birchfields Primary became our Media Cubs reporters for the day and produced a film about See Myself in Books which can be viewed [here](#). Following this launch event,

twelve top authors visited venues across the city (with two authors meeting children virtually) to speak to children and young people.



*Children and authors at the See Myself in Books event at Stoller Hall in March*

## **Bookgifting**

Ensuring equal access to books through our bookgifting campaign has been a central aspect of our offer. The books have been given to residents via community groups, foodbanks, youth groups, churches and refugee groups. As far as possible, choice of books is encouraged so that recipients can choose books that appeal to them. Over Christmas, 140 organisations have requested books for gifting to children and families, and we have given 12,956 books to these organisations. One community group told us:

*"We love providing books to our centre users. They are often going through financial and mental hardship and the simple act of gifting a book can bring a lot of joy and happiness. Anything that helps provide a present helps relieve parents of financial burden. The gift is also an act of care from us and helps us build the relationships with the centre users".*

During 2025, over 67,000 books were gifted to Manchester residents, schools and community groups, valued at nearly £400k, plus magazines and other resources. These resources are received by us for free – mostly from publishers who support our literacy hub, Read Manchester. Book gifting campaigns and activity promote engagement with libraries and library membership.



*Bookgifting recipients*

**Take 10** is a core campaign of Read Manchester, and will be a central component of 2026's National Year of Reading. It encourages people to read for at least 10 minutes a day to support mental wellbeing and literacy. This year, our focus was a series of Take 10 events across the two weeks surrounding World Mental Health Day, which is celebrated every year on 10 October. The day is about raising awareness of the importance of mental health and enabling discussions around the topic. The theme for 2025 was mental health around crises and emergencies. To mark the day, we visited two hospitals - Royal Manchester Children's Hospital and The Christie - to distribute free new books to staff and patients and held conversations about how reading supports mental wellbeing. Comments included;

*"Reading is a wonderful and rewarding escape from the stressful working world in the hospital,"* and *"Thank you. Reading quietens a mind worrying about cancer."*



*Staff at The Christie Hospital choosing books*

Additionally, 150 children from three Manchester schools joined an event at Manchester Central Library with author and poet Oliver Sykes. Oli shared his personal story about the power of reading for just 10 minutes a day. He has also supported our Take 10 campaign with [this video of his poem \*Your Climb\*](#).



*Author Oli Sykes with children from St Brigid's Primary School*

### **Transition Reads – year 6/7 and Early Years**

2025 marked the sixth year of our year 6/7 Transition Read and the third year of our Early Years Transition Read. The year 6/7 book was once again 'Quiet Storm' by local author Kimberly Whittam. All year 6 pupils received a copy of the books to keep at the transition sessions into their new high schools. Reading the same book and taking part in lessons and activities themed around *Quiet Storm* offers pupils a shared experience when they start high school, irrespective of which primary school they attend. Set in Manchester with voices and situations young people could connect with, it made the perfect choice. Kimberly says:

"I wrote *Quiet Storm* for children who struggle with shyness; children who don't speak up, no matter how much they want to. It's also a celebration of the chaotic yet joyous tribulations that occur every day in classrooms across the country."

To support schools, as well as specially made resources, we made visits to Levenshulme High School, Manchester Academy, Loreto High School, St Matthew's RC High School, and CO-OP Academy North on their transition days, with Kimberly presenting to almost 1000 students over 2 days. Kimberley made further visits to libraries over the summer and to more high schools in September.



*Kimberly Whittam with her book, Quiet Storm and pupils from Levenshulme High*

For our Early Years Transition Read, the chosen book was *The One and Only You* by Shane Hegarty and Ben Mantle, which was given to children during their transition day visits in the summer term. Registered childminders, nurseries and SureStart Children's Centres in the city have also been sent a copy so that they can share the story in their settings. Moving up to school is a big step for children, and the idea behind the transition read is to support and encourage families to chat and spend time together. A 'Take 10 Minutes Everyday' leaflet has been produced to support the programme, with top tips for families about sharing stories. These are available to download in English and nine other community languages – Arabic, Bengali, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Oromo, Polish, Romanian and Urdu.

### **Non-fiction November**

In November 2025 we held our first Non-Fiction November celebration to promote non-fiction to children. Often these books can be a different way in to reading, with boys especially likely to enjoy non-fiction titles. In research carried out by the National Literacy Trust, over half (56%) of children and young people said they read non-fiction. A focus of the 2026 Year of Reading is to encourage readers to 'Go All In!' on the subjects they care about, and access to exciting and varied non-fiction is crucial to this. Working with publishers DK, Guinness World Records, and What On Earth books, we held author visits and gave away books to schools and pupils across the city.

### **Library of the Year Award**

Manchester Libraries has won Library of the Year at the British Book Awards 2025, for its partnership with Blue Peter Book Club in 2024.

The revival of the Library of the Year award at this year's event in May was awarded to Manchester Libraries in recognition of its multi-strand and city-wide Blue Peter Book Club Live programme which made 'superb' use of the Blue Peter brand to bring children and families into contact with libraries and reading.

The [#BluePeterBookClubLive](#) programme of activities in summer 2024 included a 'takeover' of presenters and authors at a launch event at Central Library and a book badge trail around the city. During the campaign, children's library membership increased by 33% compared to the same period in 2023, and 12,308 people became new library members during the campaign period.



## **National Year of Reading 2026**

The National Year of Reading 2026 is a campaign to address the [decline in reading for pleasure](#), amongst children, young people and adults. It is a Department for Education initiative, in collaboration with the National Literacy Trust, as their delivery partner of the campaign.

Announced by Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, it is intended to position reading as a powerful contemporary activity and will aim to engage new audiences in reading and to change the national reading culture for good. [Government statement](#). Reading is central to the Government's Plan for Change: it supports success in school, work and in life, boosts wellbeing, brings people together and increases empathy.

Partners from different sectors are working together to bring the campaign alive; more information is available here - [Go All In](#). Our Manchester 'Take 10' campaign has been taken on nationally and will be one of the 'tentpole' moments of the Year of Reading.

## Appendix 6: Libraries Supporting Business

**“Manchester offers the best support for start-ups in the world!”**

Ricky Leung, global food trader and restaurateur, & Build A Business client

The Business & IP Centre (BIPC), Build A Business programme, and Generator enterprise hubs each play a distinct role in supporting entrepreneurs, working together to guide individuals from their initial idea through to early trading. This ecosystem creates a connected, supportive network of spaces, guidance, and resources that helps entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey - an approach widely admired across the BIPC National Network.

This includes

- **Access to knowledge and expertise:** Entrepreneurs use specialist databases, workshops and expert advice to test ideas and build key skills.
- **Support tailored to every stage:** From early-stage help through *Build A Business* to hands-on guidance at the Generator hubs, support is matched to each entrepreneur’s needs.
- **A thriving peer community:** The hubs bring like-minded entrepreneurs together, encouraging collaboration, inspiration and peer learning.
- **Practical, affordable resources:** Workspace, meeting rooms and ongoing mentorship help businesses tackle real-world operational challenges.

### Research & Test Your Idea: Business & IP Centre (BIPC)

**Business &  
IP Centre**  
Manchester

The BIPC (on the second floor of Central Library) is the starting point for many entrepreneurs, offering expert resources to help shape and validate business ideas. The BIPC gives you direct access to tools and advice to check your idea will work.

- Free access to leading market research information to understand demand and competitors
- Guidance on business basics and intellectual property
- Workshops to build essential skills covering business planning, marketing, and finance.

The current year is reporting high engagement with our target audience.

Year to date (April 2025 – Dec 2020):

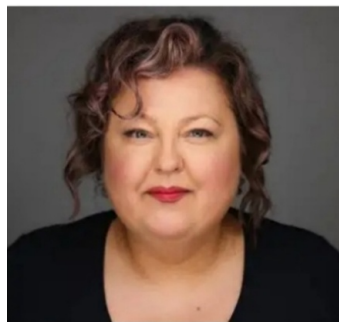
- 4,705 attendees including 1,354 1-2-1 appointments
- 161 workshops
- 134 events including inspiring talks and networking

Highlights for the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) this year included:

**Start-Up Day 2025:** our flagship annual event, and an important day in our calendar. Our keynote speaker was Emma Bowe, the co-founder of **Shocken Foods**, a multi-award-winning founder who went from a working-class upbringing on the Irish coast to building a globally recognised, venture capital-backed food innovation company.

A former national boxing champion and Michelin-trained chef, Emma lost everything during the pandemic and rebuilt from scratch - transforming adversity into opportunity and proving that with resilience, self-belief, and relentless determination, transformation is possible no matter where you start from. She has won many awards including Food Startup of the Year and is passionate about supporting new businesses. The attendees connected with this inspiring entrepreneur and the feedback was excellent:

The day was packed with highlights, including a dynamic panel featuring three local businesses that really resonated with attendees. The social media workshop, finance presentation and speed mentoring were equally popular, sparking lively discussions and enthusiastic engagement. To make the day even more special, the talented local photographer, Breige Cobane offered free professional headshots.



## In Conversation with Joanna Jensen, founder of Childs Farm

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November



In November we welcomed Joanna Jensen to the BIPC, discussing her new book “Making Business Childs Play”, a behind-the-scenes guide to building a purpose-led challenger brand. In a fireside chat with Wendy Breakell, Joanna talked about many issues from start up to product development to exit strategy. This was followed by an audience Q&A and a networking lunch.

“A fantastic motivational and inspiring session”.

“Wonderful talk. Fuel for the fire! Excellent event - thank you BIPC!”

“Very inspiring! Joanna covered a lot of interesting points and was very gracious and open in sharing her experience and what she had learned. Very glad I came”.

**Intellectual Property support: PatLib**

Additionally, the BIPC's focus on protecting intellectual property ensures that innovators safeguard their ideas as they prepare for launch.

Manchester Libraries took over the Chair of Patlib UK at the end of 2025 in December we hosted the annual Patlib UK AGM, welcoming delegates from across the UK.

Patlib (PATent LIBrary) is a national network of local information centres that provide expert guidance and resources on intellectual property (IP), including patents, trademarks, and designs, to help businesses, inventors, and researchers protect and commercialize their innovations.

In the UK the network is based in public libraries, offering free or low-cost services like IP search assistance, IP strategy advice, and referrals to IP professionals, bridging the gap between complex IP systems and local innovators.

Our membership of the Patlib UK network strengthens our ability to reach small business owners looking to safeguard their ideas and innovations.

"The support from the BIPC has been invaluable in turning my business idea into a reality."

### **World IP Day 2025 Feel the Beat of IP - 26 April 2025**

"World IP Day 2025 Feel the Beat of IP" successfully addressed intellectual property protection for creative professionals. Hosted by Martyn Walsh, the expert panel featured Daniel Jones (PRS for Music), Anna Appleby (Norrisette), Tom Clarke (SharpFutures), and Peter Pegasiou (Glaisyers Legal). The diverse panel delivered comprehensive insights which effectively bridged creative innovation with commercial protection, providing attendees with practical knowledge essential for safeguarding intellectual assets in today's digital landscape.



### **Podcasting**

The Business & IP Centre offers free access to a podcast studio, helping charities, entrepreneurs and creatives bring their ideas to life. Introductory sessions guide users through the basics so they can start recording with confidence.

**Samantha Harwood**, Marketing and Communications Manager at **Manchester Mind**, discovered the studio at Manchester Central Library and saw an opportunity to try something new. She recorded *Mindfulness and Relaxation for Menopause* to mark World Menopause Day in October 2024, highlighting Manchester Mind's pioneering courses. Since then, she has produced a series of wellbeing and mental health episodes, all recorded at the BIPC.

During Local Mind Week, Manchester Mind released two new episodes under the theme "*Chats that matter, for minds that matter.*" The conversations feature **Lucy Mulligan**,

Director of Marketing at Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and **Nino Gioia**, a Manchester Mind fundraiser and content creator. Both guests share honest reflections on workplace wellbeing, personal mental health journeys and the importance of community support—helping to raise awareness and challenge stigma. Samantha said: “As a charity, having access to the equipment for free is invaluable and gave us the chance to do something different.



Our podcast has now been listened to over 1,000 times and has helped raise awareness of key wellbeing and mental health topics—and the work we do at Manchester Mind.”

## Developing Your Ideas: Build A Business in GM Libraries

### Build A Business in GM Libraries



- Extends Business & IP Centre expertise from Manchester Central Library to all 10 Greater Manchester authorities.
- Delivers a business support programme of market research, IP and marketing workshops across every area.
- Provides one-to-one guidance through a dedicated Enterprise Officer in each authority.

The “Build A Business” project secured funding for another 12 months, delivering support to pre-start and new businesses across Greater Manchester until March 2026.

The service has been a standout initiative within the Business and IP Centre, helping budding entrepreneurs across Greater Manchester to navigate the journey from idea to a successful business. The programme is funded by GMCA, and has been running since 2021. Initially ERDF funded, then UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the current funding ends in March 2026. This year is the third funding stream, and early indications are there will be further funding this year.

The program is designed not only to develop business skills but also to build the confidence of entrepreneurs in their ability to sustain and grow their businesses. Through workshops, one to one support and networking opportunities, Build A Business has empowered participants to make informed decisions and move forward with their goals. As a result, many entrepreneurs have seen growth, obtained funding, created jobs, and contributed to the city’s economy.

- Makes complex topics—like Intellectual Property—clear and accessible, helping small businesses understand and protect their assets.

- Brings support directly into neighbourhood libraries through locally delivered activities.
- Offers additional sessions on podcasting, branding and more, enabling many clients to access over 30 hours of fully funded support.

Between April-March 2026, over 1300 people have attended at workshops & events

The projects outputs include supporting

- 500 Potential Entrepreneurs (target 285)
- 200+ Enterprises (target 100)

“I learnt so much! I came in knowing nothing, I left with confidence and knowledge”

“I found the workshop incredibly valuable—especially the discussions around IP protection and AI.”

“I truly appreciate the work you and your team are doing to empower local entrepreneurs with knowledge, resources, and one-to-one guidance—all completely free and funded by the government. This is an outstanding initiative that deserves wider recognition.”

### **Build A Business Case Study:**

#### **Charlie Boy’s Barkery**

Karen is from Blackley and the founder of **Charlie Boy’s Dog Barkery**.

After attending her first workshop - Business Basics, she went away and registered with HMRC as a sole trader that afternoon. Her dog bakery business has gone from strength to strength becoming a fully formed concern. Charlie Boy’s Dog Barkery is now a registered trademark. As well as making products to order she sells regularly at various Makers Markets and had not one but two stalls at 2025 Manchester Christmas Markets.



“My experience of Build a Business has been brilliant. Starting out in business on your own can be overwhelming...you have a million things buzzing round your brain. The free courses provided me with much needed, invaluable knowledge that gave me the confidence to bring my idea of Charlie Boy’s Barkery, a bakery for dogs, to life. The guys that are involved in Build a Business are fantastic, I found them so approachable which enabled me to ask questions without feeling stupid, they have a genuine interest in you and your business. They gave me endless sources of research & insights into the important things like Intellectual Property, Marketing, Market research & more. It’s great to know I have the support of Build a Business when I need it.”



### **Build A Business: Summer Highlights Across Greater Manchester Libraries**

This summer, the Build a Business team hit the road, popping up at libraries all over Greater Manchester to support local residents on their entrepreneurial journeys. In Manchester we set up info stands at Abraham Moss Library, North City Library (featuring their shiny new business pod!), and Avenue Library, chatting with aspiring business owners and sharing resources to help them get started.

We also took our popular Intellectual Property workshop to Chorlton Library, making great use of their newly refurbished meeting rooms, which are fantastic! The turnout was brilliant, and we met some exciting new businesses that are definitely ones to watch.

One of the big highlights was piloting a brand-new workshop on business strategy, aimed at helping entrepreneurs and small business owners build strong foundations for long-term success. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one attendee saying:

*"Wonderful session – incredibly informative. Keith is a real asset with invaluable knowledge! More events/workshops with him please."*

To wrap up the summer, we took part in the Bolton Food and Drink Festival, setting up a stall to spread the word about Build a Business across Greater Manchester. The sun was shining, the crowds were buzzing, and we had lots of great conversations with people eager to kickstart their business ideas.

### **Chorlton Build a Business Pop-Up**

To celebrate the reopening of Chorlton Library, the Build a Business Team hosted a pop-up business support stall, engaging with entrepreneurs and start-ups across South Manchester. Set against the backdrop of the library's splendid Carnegie architecture, the event marked our most successful pop-up of the year. We connected with numerous new businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs, many of whom expressed strong interest in our upcoming programme of business workshops.

## **Bringing Your Business to Life: Generator Enterprise Hubs**



When you're ready to trade, the Generator hubs provide the space and support to get going.

- Affordable workspace and meeting rooms
- Access to support from the in-house Enterprise Officers
- A community of entrepreneurs to share ideas and challenges with

Our two enterprise hubs in the city centre continue to be successful, providing accessible spaces where entrepreneurs collaborate, network, and access essential resources.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the hubs offer everything from co-working and meeting space to expert-led workshops and one-to-one support.

The Generators—located in the Town Hall Extension and Royal Mills, Ancoats—provide the physical space and community infrastructure entrepreneurs need to thrive. Participants attend workshops, connect with peers, and gain practical, actionable advice.

The hubs remain particularly valuable for those in early trading, delivering ongoing support that helps businesses establish themselves, grow their networks, and build a strong local presence.

The Generators actively nurture their community, bringing entrepreneurs and business together through events and activities, including monthly networking. Many are existing businesses that were unaware of the support available:

### **Generator Case Study**

“Generator Manchester has played a vital role in the growth and development of my **company Parti Events Ltd**. As a startup in the events sector, having access to a structured, professional environment has been invaluable — not just for daily operations, but also for scaling our team and business strategy.

In short, Generator Manchester has been more than just an office space — it’s been a launchpad. The infrastructure, support, and environment have all contributed significantly to the early success and sustainability of Parti Events Ltd. We’re proud to be growing our business in such a dynamic and supportive space.”

### **Inclusive Entrepreneurship**

Together, the BIPC, Build A Business program, and Generator enterprise hubs create a cohesive ecosystem, providing everything entrepreneurs need to move from an initial idea to running a thriving business. We aim to empower individuals with the tools, resources, and support they need to take their first steps into entrepreneurship. The services have been highly effective in reaching traditionally underserved groups in business support:

- 64% of customers are women
- 41% BAME
- 12% disabled

The BIPC delivered events tailored to underrepresented groups, including "Women in Business" events for International Women’s Day, the launching of a new network aimed at neurodiverse people, and ongoing “Olderpreneurs” events for the over 50s. Activity this year included:

### **International Women’s Day 2025**



## Inspire. Uplift. Empower. Celebrating National Women's Enterprise Week 19 June 2025

Out event for NWEW at Manchester Central Library created a dynamic networking environment where women could access mentorship and peer support. The centrepiece speed mentoring session, featuring seven accomplished mentors, generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants who gained practical business insights and established valuable connections. The event effectively embodied NWEW's mission to inspire female entrepreneurship, with participants expressing appreciation for the networking opportunities and quality mentorship received throughout the programme.



## Meet the Ukrainian Business Community

We were delighted to host our first meetup in September! The team introduced attendees to Business & IP Centre Manchester's impressive £5 million collection of business databases. These resources are designed to support both budding entrepreneurs and established businesses looking to grow. The event also featured dedicated networking time, giving Ukrainian entrepreneurs the opportunity to connect and share experiences. We were especially pleased to welcome the United Hong Kong Business Association, who delivered an insightful presentation about their business activities in Manchester and beyond.

## Manchester Mega Mela

The Build A Business team was thrilled to join the South Asian community at Platt Fields Park for the Manchester Mega Mela this month. Despite facing a weekend of wind and

heavy rain, our pop-up stall sparked many engaging conversations about starting a business, and we made some fantastic new connections.

### **Supporting the United Hong Kong Business Association**

We are proud to be working alongside driven professionals from the Hong Kong community as they establish new businesses in Greater Manchester, and continue to offer tailored support through future networking events and workshops for Cantonese speaking entrepreneurs.

We were honoured to attend the United Hong Kong Business Association's (UHBA) inaugural ceremony on 4 April 2025, having supported the group's formation over the past year as part of phase 2 of the project. The Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Paul Andrews, and Build A Business Team Head Jonathan Ebbs were invited as guest speakers.

Since partnering with Hong Kong Cultural Community CIC in April 2025, we have delivered over 20 events for more than 400 participants, offering practical workshops on grant writing, governance, social enterprise, and creative skills. This collaboration has created a welcoming, professional environment where start-ups and community leaders feel confident to test ideas and develop their business skills.



Build A Business client **Ricky Leung**—global food trader and restaurateur at **Malay Malay Home** in Salford—shared his experience at the **Libraries 175** event on 9 October, expressing his appreciation for Manchester's support for new businesses: **“Manchester offers the best support for start-ups in the world. I mean it—I’ve never experienced anything like this elsewhere.”**

Build A Business also served as a guest speaker on 8 December at **Taste Hong Kong**, a major food and beverage sector conference hosted by UHBA. We presented resources to help start-ups and small businesses achieve sustainable growth to nearly 70 industry professionals. The event strengthened the Hong Kong food and beverage community in Manchester and fostered valuable connections ahead of the busy festive trading period.

### **Jeff Lui, Chairman of the United Hong Kong Business Association:**

“On behalf of the United Hong Kong Business Association, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Build A Business team for the unwavering support and guidance. Your support has not only helped establish UHBA but has also empowered our members with the confidence to start anew in Manchester, many of whom have bravely transitioned from Hong Kong. A special thanks to Jonathan Ebbs for his leadership and commitment, which have made this partnership truly impactful. We deeply value the workshops, networking events, and practical advice provided, and we look forward to continuing this meaningful journey together to create even greater opportunities for the community.”

## **NeuroNetwork MCR**

Launched in 2024, NeuroNetwork MCR celebrated its first year in October 2025. Founded by Rebecca Moley, a business consultant and coach whose lived experience as an AuDHD entrepreneur inspired her to create a safe, inclusive space for Neurodivergent business owners. Through her coaching business, [Calm Horizon Coaching](#), and her collaboration with the Business & IP Centre Manchester, Rebecca has helped build a vibrant community where Neurodivergent entrepreneurs can connect, share, and thrive.

This in-person networking event is exclusively for ND entrepreneurs, business owners and sole traders. It is a safe space where attendees can talk about the wins as well as the struggles of running a business while managing their Neurodivergent challenges. “It has had such a fantastic response, the people that attend absolutely make it, they are so supportive of each other, there is a lot of validation and sharing of tips and tools”.

## **Build A Business & GMCA Tackling Inequalities Pilot**

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) launched the Tackling Inequalities pilot to test new ways of reaching a diverse range of business owners and addressing barriers to growth. The pilot provides up to £5,000 per business for enterprises that have been trading for at least three months, with payments processed by the Growth Hub.

The fund is by invitation only as it is a test model to see how particular types of businesses may benefit from extra support.

BAB has been central to delivery: successful applicants must have completed a minimum of 6 hours support from Build A Business.

The fund is already helping businesses tackle practical barriers to growth. Applications for the funding include buying equipment or technology to improve or support their business in practical ways including in one case a photographer taking driving lessons to be able to reach more customers.

So far approximately £230,000 in direct grants funding has been unlocked.

## Appendix 8: Cultural and Creative programme

Manchester Libraries are a vital part of the city's cultural and creative infrastructure, often providing access to residents' first cultural experience. Libraries are the most visited cultural venue in the city. The Central Library cultural programme, Library Live, is complemented by activities across all libraries, including three libraries badged as Creative Spaces – North City, Longsight and Wythenshawe Forum. The cultural and creative programme has been developed through several successful Arts Council England funding grants, establishing strong relationships with the city's creative and cultural organisations and community groups and supporting library staff's skills and confidence in programming creative events.

Alongside the busy events calendar delivered by library staff, such as cultural festival days, Sunday Fundays, school holiday crafting, Holiday Activity Fund sessions, weekly storytimes, author events, age friendly groups etc, the cultural programme provides access to other high quality creative experiences and opportunities on residents' doorsteps, as well as an introduction to the citywide offer. The cultural programme is delivered in partnership with the city's cultural organisations and artists, supported and informed by library staff.

The Creative Space opened on the first floor of Wythenshawe Forum Library, launched last October, is proving to be popular with regular youth music, youth theatre, cinema and podcasting/broadcasting sessions, as well as school-based learning engagements, community workshops, and arts-led wellbeing initiatives.

Work at space has been recognised two awards programmes in 2025. In June, against fierce competition from 100 other library services throughout the UK, Manchester won the Culture and Creativity category at the prestigious Libraries Connected Award. Libraries Connected said that the Creative Space *"is already a thriving, youth focused venue bringing cultural and creative opportunities to people's doorsteps"*.

Then in November Wythenshawe Live Night took home the trophy for Best Event at the Manchester Culture Awards. The event was a sold-out showcase for 30 young performers to an audience of 120 at the Creative Space. It was the culmination of a youth-led music programme by Brighter Sound with local partners, Music Evermore, and others. The event highlighted music's power to build confidence, identity and community, while laying foundations for a lasting local music offer as both brighter Sound and Music Evermore continue delivery in the space and Wythenshawe.



## Highlights of the cultural programme: February 2025 – January 2026

### Fun Palaces

Fun Palaces is a national initiative – free events made by local people for their own community. At Fun Palaces people come together to share their skills, passions and interests, and to show the world just how brilliant and packed full of genius their community is!



### Longsight Library Fun Palace

At Longsight Library's Fun Palace on the first Saturday of October the library's partners and friends were extremely generous with their time and creativity to engage families, young people and others.

People tried out simple and beautiful Tai Chi moves and learnt how to write Chinese calligraphy using brushes with Dragon Voice.

*Such a nice lady. My child was really impressed by seeing his name in Chinese. Great work for community.*

The Family Volunteer Club helped participants make friendship bracelets as gifts for people experiencing homelessness, while artist Emma Martin of Building Bridges, the Whitworth Art Gallery and Olympias Music Foundation all also contributed with arts, zine and music making activities and Joseph Ayavoro, a sculptor, from Creative Hands Foundation made paper people sculptures wearing tradition Yoruba dress.

*My son enjoyed this activity. It is interesting to learn about other cultures through this type of activity.*

There was science too – with the National Institute for Health & Care Research bringing their human torso jigsaw model, in which children had to work out where the different organs of the body should go.

### **North City Library Fun Palace**

At North City, alongside 3-D craft activities, the fabulously exciting Love Science ran fizzy, magical experiments and slime making workshops, as well as opportunities to try out mini yoga, podcasting , create Lego sculptures and plant daffodil bulbs to take home ready to see it grow and bloom in the spring!

Afrocats, a charity working to address and dismantle inequality, ran an inspiring collage activity that linked to their exhibition, 'Building Stronger Communities Together', which was on display in the library at the same time (see below for further information.)

### **Exhibition Presented by Afrocats at North City Library**



The Afrocats 'Building Stronger Communities Together' Exhibition was a celebration of communities in North Manchester, using creativity to create conversation and draw attention to the unique attributes that make up different communities in the area.

Over three months, Afrocats worked with organisations, including, Broadoake Court, No 93, Al Hilal Regen, Simpson Memorial Hall, Artree, A Pedra De Siao, ESOL in Abraham Moss and Sick Festival. Participants created artwork under the theme of community and shared similarities using paint, ceramics and mixed media with the help of artist facilitators.

The project showcased the spirit of North Manchester communities and shone a light on the diverse creative talent and voices that live within it. Afrocats held an exhibition launch and film screening on Monday 22 September which was well attended with upwards of 50 attendees overall.

### **Manchester's Cultural Strategy Pillar – Everything**

In Manchester's Cultural Strategy, *Always, Everywhere*, the second pillar – *Everything* – is a commitment to recognise much more of everyday Mancunian cultural life and make sure culture really does connect with the issues that matter to people. Our libraries are central to this ambition, providing space and resources for residents to explore and share their own artistic skills and creative ideas, either in self-guided groups or with support from libraries Delivery Assistants. Here are some examples.

### **Miles Platting Community Library**



Following two of the local children expressing interest a staff member's childhood puppet collection, he brought them in and they all built a paper mache theatre using cardboard, buttons and lots of PVA glue. A great introduction to a theatre stage.

The library houses six donated sewing machines, all in full working order, which are often brought out for our customers to brush up on their sewing skills.

### **Moss Side Powerhouse**

Children attending the library's Thursday craft club make fantastic decorations for display. Working with library staff the focus is on re- and upcycling because you can make art out of basically any everyday object, even if it is "rubbish".

### **Hulme**



At Hulme library 2025's International Women's Day was celebrated with a cakes and refreshments Coffee Morning and a Mindful Craft session with Origami Cranes and Card-making.

### **Crafters celebrate the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025**



Rugby Football Union put out a call for help to engage local crocheting and knitting groups in the host cities of the Women's Rugby World Cup 2025. They were challenged to make rugby balls, red roses and red and white bunting from yarn to be displayed in libraries and galleries for the duration of the tournament.

Supported by Delivery Assistant, Anna Putek, the successful monthly Crochet and Chat Club at Manchester Central Library and libraries all over Manchester, with many knitting and crocheting groups got. It's estimated that Manchester crocheters and knitters volunteered over 1000 hours and used up the equivalent of nearly 2 miles of wool for this yarnbombing project. There were beautiful displays of the work on the lower ground floor of Manchester Central Library and at other libraries, including The Avenue, where the Blackley Craft and Crochet Group had got involved.

### **Festival of Libraries 2025 Highlights**

Returning for its fifth year, and winner of Best Event at the Manchester Culture Awards in 2024, Festival of Libraries, in partnership with Manchester City of Literature, is the biggest festival of its type in the country, bringing programming to all 133 of Greater Manchester's libraries. the festival is filled with exhibitions, performances, installations, workshops, Family Friendly activities and international collaborations. It is made possible thanks to the support of Arts Council England.

Manchester contributed a range of events to the festival at Central and neighbourhood libraries, including:

Central Library hosted Guy Garvey, Mercury Prize-winning frontman of Elbow and Shaun Keaveny, long-time BBC 6 Music broadcaster in thought-provoking conversation event exploring themes of community, creativity, working-class identity, music, memory, radio, and the role that places like libraries play in shaping our cultural lives.

At Gorton library, Reform Radio ran an exciting, interactive DJ workshop providing hands on experience on the decks and insights into the ins and outs of DJ life and at Chorlton library there was an informative event for writers, exploring the process of editing a group anthology.

Forum, Gorton and North City libraries, as well as regular library partner, Z-arts all held Fun Days of creative activities and entertainment for all ages.

*The event reinforced my view of Manchester as a community-centred city*  
-festival participant

More information can be found on Manchester City Of Literature's Youth Tube channel (<https://youtu.be/6l3Lp354DnU>)

### **Manchester Creativity in Place**

Libraries are an essential partner in the Manchester Creativity in Place programme, funded by Arts Council England. The programme is delivering activity to increase access to cultural opportunities locally in north Manchester and Wythenshawe.

We developed a partnership with International Music Making, an established charity keen to develop activity in the north of Manchester.

The programme delivered 11 pop-up events at The Avenue, Newton Heath, and North City and Abraham Moss Libraries. The events offered inclusive activities such as songwriting, group singing, drumming and creative conversations. Participants were encouraged to celebrate culture and heritage through storytelling, oral history, and opportunities for building connections across generations.

*"My child didn't want to leave; he loved playing the ukulele so much. We really enjoyed the session!"* - parent

*"a community is a group of people who share common goals."* - lyric from song devised by a group

Library staff also supported some participants of library groups to attend a national culmination event – Access All Ages - at the Bridgewater Hall organised by Intergenerational Music Making and Intergenerational England. The event brought

together people of all ages, backgrounds, and sectors to experience the transformative power of music across generations.

**The Creative Space** at the Forum library partnered with Creativity in Place and Wythenshawe Community Housing Group to host a Cultural Community Connector event. 15 creative businesses and organisations came together to hear more about the Creative Space and Creativity in Place, as well as spending time networking and making connections

**Zoe Williams**

**Culture Lead**

## **Appendix 9 - Supporting Health and Wellbeing**

Libraries offer a wide range of health and well-being activities that have a primary effect on improving people's health and also have a broader impact on well-being for the individual and the wider community. Libraries are also key for residents receiving accurate health information, through digital access, health information and books on prescription and reading well collections such as Reading Well for Dementia and Reading Well for Mental Health. As community venues, libraries are also used by partner organisations to deliver health promotion sessions.

### **Social isolation, loneliness and mental health support**

Loneliness and social isolation are now recognised as having significant impacts on people's physical, as well as mental health. The latest Public Library User Survey in 2023 showed that 80% of customers who feel lonely regularly, feel less lonely because of using the library. People of all ages feel lonely but can feel as a sense of belonging in libraries – this is the case for many young people. For older people, loneliness and social isolation can be chronic issues - according to Age UK, more than a million older people go for over a month without speaking to a friend, neighbour or family member. Being socially isolated is a key risk factor for older people in terms of dementia and other mental health conditions, and libraries can offer safe spaces for older people to meet others, and either engage in activities, or just have a chat and a natter. We have an Age Friendly hour and an Age Friendly space at all libraries to provide a friendly accessible space, and social activities for older people.

### **Making Manchester Fairer**

Libraries play a key role in the Making Manchester Fairer programme to reduce health inequalities in the city. As free, welcoming, non-judgemental spaces, libraries are recognised as community venues that are crucial to supporting the aims of this programme. Libraries play a key role in all the Making Manchester Fairer projects – Libraries are crucial to the Making Manchester Fairer Anti-Poverty Strategy, and have delivered a commissioned project to reduce digital exclusion with parents at flying start schools, and older people.

### **Warm spaces**

As in previous winters, during the winter months of 25/26 all libraries across the city have acted as warm spaces. All libraries provide somewhere warm and a free hot drink for people who may be struggling with the cost of heating at home. Free hot drink provision, which this year included City Library, lasts from October to February. This benefits health by helping keep people warm and socially active.

### **Cool Spaces**

For the first time this summer our libraries became Cool Spaces to give people sanctuary from excessive heat during periods of hot weather. Working with the Council's communications team, libraries were promoted as places to stay cool, take a seat and to receive free drinks of cold water

### **Digital Health Hubs**

Supporting health is a key element of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan managed by the libraries team. Digitally excluded people may be unable to access information and services relating to health. To help overcome these we have developed a Digital Health Hubs initiative. This is now in existence in Wythenshawe, Crumpsall, Cheetham Hill and Harpurhey, and will be rolled out to different areas 2026. Residents are provided with relevant NHS app training in community venues including libraries, on the NHS App and MfT app. We created promotional materials that outline exactly what offers are available from those centres, which are then displayed in GP surgeries. This initiative is a great demonstration of libraries supporting residents with their health and wellbeing.

### **Package for Val**

We know that women and girls in our communities are facing period poverty. According to a representative survey of 1,000 girls and young women aged 14-21 by Plan International UK, in the UK, 1 in 10 girls can't afford to buy menstrual products, while 1 in 7 have struggled to afford them. Package for Val was rolled out across 18 of our neighbourhood and community libraries in 2024 and continues to provide sanitary products to those who need them.

### **Dry January**

An example of a health initiative the Manchester Libraries have taken part in is Dry January. Working with Manchester Metropolitan University, we have purchased books and hosting events at Central Library to promote libraries as warm, safe, alcohol-free spaces, that can be seen as a supportive first step for many in changing damaging habits.

### **Other organisations delivering services from libraries**

Multiple organisations deliver health related services to residents in libraries across the city. Sessions include Big Life Health sessions, Yoga, Real Food Real Health, Bread and Butter Thing, Narcotics Anonymous, smoking cessation, bereavement groups and flu vaccines.

### **Age Friendly Libraries**

Libraries continue to offer a diverse range of Age Friendly activities and events for older people, including weekly coffee times.

Events for older people include:

A recent event at North City Library which included a 'Play Your Cards Right' session and a Silent Disco! Headphones for the Silent Disco were hired from Stockport Libraries as part of a 'try before we buy' trial with a view to buying our own silent disco set which could be used for a range of events including as part of our Dementia Project.

We have worked in partnership with Equal Arts, a creative ageing charity based in Newcastle who have been developing their [Reading with Dementia](https://www.equalarts.org.uk/dementia-friendly-reading) programme to support people living with dementia to continue reading for enjoyment. We have ordered some of the books recommended to trial in several libraries.

<https://www.equalarts.org.uk/dementia-friendly-reading>

Libraries are currently developing a Dementia Friendly Resource Pack, to be available in all libraries, which includes Large Print - jigsaws, crossword puzzles, colouring books & pens and playing cards.

The Age Friendly Library standards will be reviewed later this year and Libraries are also in the process of refreshing Dementia Friends training for all staff.

Kneelers and steps have been purchased for library staff after feedback from staff who said they were struggling to reach the bottom shelves and often finding it difficult to kneel or crouch asked if we could provide a stool or kneeler - so we did! They are now available for staff to use in all Manchester Libraries.

Libraries offer digital support in libraries and telephone support via the digital inclusion team and their digital champions. This support is well accessed by older people. The telephone support is promoted via the Age Friendly Manchester E-Bulletin which goes to 12,000 recipients.

## **Appendix 10 - Supporting Learning**

Libraries offer a wide range of learning activities and opportunities for all ages that increase the skills of our residents. As community venues, libraries are also used by partner organisations to deliver health promotion sessions.

Libraries are also a key community venue for residents signposting to other opportunities in communities

In 2024, Manchester was officially recognised as a UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning, in recognition of the city's efforts to make lifelong learning a reality for all. The application was co-designed with 150+ organisations, with many more also contributing to the city's lifelong learning approach, from basic through to higher education. Our libraries are a key partner, as a venue to host learning opportunities for families and across communities.

### **Co-location with Manchester Adult Education Service**

A number of libraries co-locate with Manchester Adult Education Service – Longsight Library and Learning Centre, Avenue Library and Learning Centre and Forum Library is located directly next to MAES in the Forum Centre. Last year this was extended to Newton Heath Library. This co-location is proving successful with services working successfully together, enabling Newton Heath residents to receive multiple services under one roof.

### **Direct provision of learning**

Over 100 hours per month of learning sessions per month are delivered across libraries. There is a wide range of learning activities delivered such as Manchester Adult Education Service (in libraries not co-located with MAES), Talk English Circles, IT drop ins and Music lessons for children at Longsight Library from the Olympus Music Foundation. Taster sessions were delivered by learning organisations in 8 libraries during Festival of Libraries in June and Festival of Learning Week in September – this will occur again this year.

### **Literacy**

Libraries support literacy of children and adults. Literacy is a key determinant of quality of life and libraries play a key role from provision of free access to books, being a venue for Read Easy which support basic literacy in adults, and through a wide range of Read Manchester initiatives as detailed in Appendix 5.

### **Digital Skills**

Digital skills and inclusion are crucial to Manchester's status as a UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning, reflecting the city's commitment to lifelong learning initiatives. By 2030, it is projected that over 85% of jobs will require advanced digital skills.

Libraries provide free access to the Internet and the range of online learning opportunities including Learn My Way. Library staff and volunteers also provide support and skills development to residents. Weekly IT drop-in sessions take place in each library, providing an extra level of support and skills development to customers. The libraries digital inclusion team also offers telephone support to Manchester residents through digital champion volunteers.

### **Supporting businesses and entrepreneurs**

The Business and IP Centre and Generator Spaces provide skills training to increase residents job prospects and for entrepreneurs and business start-ups. The team also provides higher level IT skills provision such as social media, 3D printing etc.

## Appendix 11 - Manchester Libraries Library of Sanctuary Highlights 2025

### International Mother Language Day

On Saturday 22 February we marked International Mother Language Day - a UNESCO-sponsored annual event celebrating world languages and cultures - with around 200 languages spoken in Manchester it's an important day to celebrate with our communities. Hundreds of children and families joined us at libraries around the city for a day of arts, crafts and performance, offering fun, creativity and learning.



IMLD craft activities at Forum Library



IMLD at Central Library

### Refugee Week 16 to 22 June 2025

Manchester Libraries hosted a range of activities as part of Refugee Week. The theme for this Refugee Week was 'Community as a Superpower', celebrating the incredible everyday. Ordinary and extraordinary. Kindness multiplied to become an unstoppable force! Libraries are places of sanctuary and welcome for all and Manchester Libraries shared an amazing line-up of events to raise awareness and support for refugees. Across multiple libraries, residents joined in Moomin themed craft activities for children and families or watched one of three films screened in libraries celebrating the diverse way we build and sustain our communities.



Refugee week craft activities and book displays

### Central Library's Big Language Celebration

Central Library celebrated Manchester's linguistic diversity with Nottingham Trent University and the University of Nottingham in a project exploring language as heritage which culminated with a

language celebration on 13 September. Representatives from the Hungarian, Portuguese, and Romanian Consulate, Colibri Mexican Folkdance, the Chinese Music Classroom at Chetham's School of Music, and others, shared their linguistic heritage through language-themed activities. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaHDUkxQ3aI>



Manchester residents attending Big Language Celebration workshops at Central Library

### Building Stronger Communities Together Exhibition

This exhibition by Afrocats is a celebration of communities, using creativity to create conversation and draw attention to the unique attributes that make up different communities in the North Manchester area. Participants created artwork under the theme of community and shared similarities using paint, ceramics and mixed media. The project aimed to showcase the spirit of North Manchester communities and bring light to the diverse creative talent and voices that live within it.

A North City Library's Fun Palaces workshop responded to the exhibition theme of celebrate the unique and diverse qualities that make up the fabric of communities. Children used pictures of community workers to represent vital people who make up communities.



Building Stronger Communities Together Exhibition at North City Library

## Manchester Libraries: Libraries of Sanctuary Action Plan (March 2024 – March 2027)

Update: February 2026

Action	Desired Impact	Who is responsible?	Link to criteria
Continue to make sanctuary seeker learning and training opportunities available to as many staff as possible across all grades and all	As many staff as possible are fully knowledgeable across the service	Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead	Learn

<p>areas of the service. This remains a key element of our training and induction plans.</p>			
<p>Continue working group meetings 6 monthly to review activity delivered and what is planned.</p> <p>This group will also explore ways to capture feedback/record impact to inform future events/service development.</p> <p>The group meets 6 monthly with progress reported to Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead</p>	<p>Ensure Libraries of Sanctuary is fully embedding in delivery.</p> <p>Be able to evidence that work and its impact more effectively &amp; consistently.</p>	<p>Group members:</p> <p>Debby Bolding – Service Development Officer</p> <p>Service Development Coordinators: Paula Carley, Angela Rawcliffe, Leigh M'Rabty, Jodi Osborne and Mona Pasha.</p> <p>Next meeting in April 2026.</p>	<p>Embed</p>
<p>Share future library volunteer opportunities with sanctuary seekers. Increasing volunteering generally across the service is a priority over the next 3 years</p> <p>Continue to recruit volunteers from sanctuary seeker backgrounds:</p> <p>3 sanctuary seeker volunteers are supporting the Warm Hub at Didsbury Library.</p>	<p>encouraging people from a sanctuary seeker background to take part</p> <p>Volunteers gain skills/confidence and the library service gains feedback/experience from the volunteers to shape future opportunities.</p>	<p>Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead;</p> <p>Debby Bolding, Service Development Officer</p>	<p>Embed</p>
<p>Be part of the Streams Network – ensuring someone attends quarterly meetings</p> <p>Representatives attend NW Network and GM Sanctuary Seekers Community Response Group meetings</p>	<p>build connections with/learn from other organisations working in Manchester from other streams and supporting each others work</p> <p>Share what we are doing in libraries</p>	<p>Debby Bolding – Service Development Officer and</p> <p>Service Development Coordinators: Paula Carley, Angela Rawcliffe, Leigh M'Rabty, Jodie Osborne, Mona Pasha.</p>	<p>Share</p>
<p>Support Manchester City Council's commitment to</p>	<p>promote the value of the awards, and the</p>	<p>Philip Cooke, Libraries and</p>	<p>Share</p>

becoming a Local Authority of Sanctuary	importance of the message of welcome and inclusion across the city	Archives Lead	
<p>Continue to share refugee experiences through library events, activities, and exhibitions.</p> <p>2025 activity highlights include: Refugee Week film screenings and family craft activities across the city; Central Library Big Language Celebration project; Afrocats Building Stronger Communities Together Exhibition at North City</p>	promote the importance of the message of welcome and inclusion across the city	Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead; Debby Bolding, Service Development Officer and Service Development Coordinators: Paula Carley, Angela Rawcliffe, Leigh M'Rabty, Jodi Osborne.	Share
Maintain strong relationships with local partners	help us to deliver a strong, relevant offer for migrant communities	Philip Cooke, Libraries and Archives Lead; Debby Bolding, Service Development Officer and Service Development Coordinators: Paula Carley, Angela Rawcliffe, Leigh M'Rabty, Jodie Osborne.	Embed

## Appendix 12: Archives

Manchester Libraries manages the Greater Manchester County Record Office function on behalf of GMCA, holding records from across the city region. We manage two partnerships – The Archives+ partnership with colleagues at Manchester Central Library and the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership with the nine other GM Local Authorities.

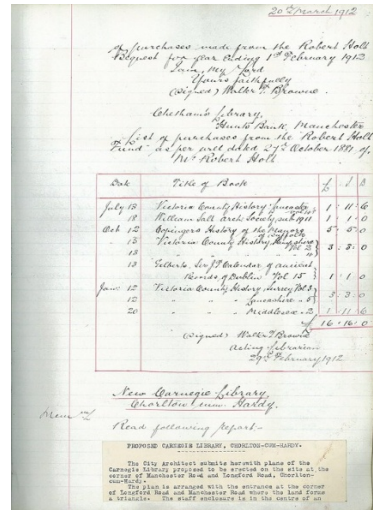
Archives tell the story of Manchester and its people. We are increasingly collecting contemporary archives that relate to Manchester's current community, and are very relevant to the Pride in Place agenda and social cohesion.

This has been a particularly rich year for Archives+ exhibitions, Highlights have included Piccadilly Radio archives exhibition, the George House Trust exhibition, the LGBT Foundation archives exhibition, Remembering Oxford Mills, Architecture for the People, Manchester City Architect's Department 1902-2003 and [Libraries 175: Celebrating 175 years of the Public Libraries Act 1850](#) which was produced by Manchester Archives. The most recent exhibition is the acclaimed Manchester-based Lipservice Theatre company. Founder Sue Ryding has been busy with her group of volunteers digitising and cataloguing this 40 year collection of theatre scripts, photographs and props including a life-sized sheep and a comic Victorian murder victim called the Major. These and other materials from this fascinating archive will form part of the Funny Stuff exhibition launching in early January 2026. Volunteers are currently hard at work creating Ken and Barbie-style Action dolls featuring characters from the 23 Lipservice shows which toured across the UK. Various exhibitions were also held in the Manchester Histories Hub.

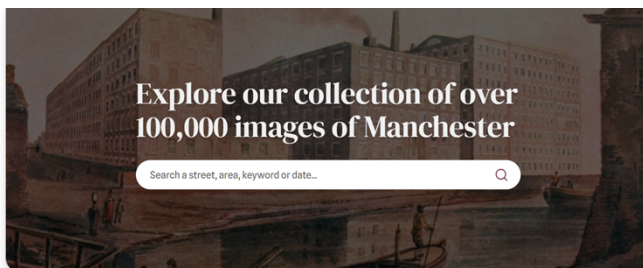


The Titanic Manchester Exhibition was held in Manchester Central in August. It was a major tourist attraction with over 35,000 people visiting. Manchester Archives and the

North West Film Archive showcased our own Titanic stories alongside this outstanding exhibition. Our mini-exhibition, located at the entrance to the main exhibition displayed a collection of archives that we hold including family photographs, film and documents related to the stories around the Titanic. This includes correspondence relating to Chorlton Library whose plans were lost because of the sinking of the Titanic.



We were awarded £100k in 2023 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop a new website for the Manchester Local Image Collection and digitise 10,000 more images by over 20 local volunteers. The website went live in 2025 and has brought together online for the first time all the library's digitised local photographs. <https://images.manchester.gov.uk/>. It has been used to create exhibitions at Central Library featuring articles created by the volunteers and workshops which have generated new stories to share. in a streamlined service which will allow improved and wider access to the collections and income generation. More images have continued to be put on the website, which is used increasingly during engagement events.

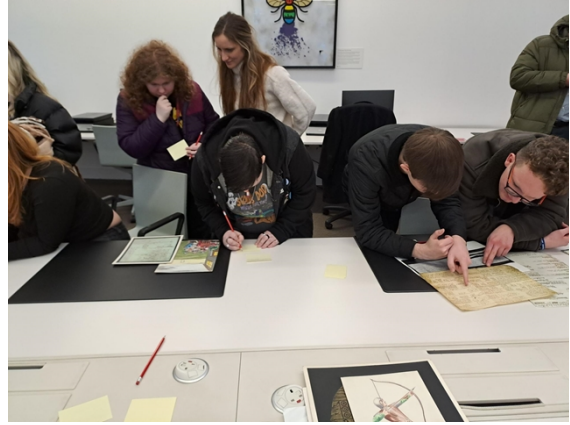


### A unique photographic snapshot of Manchester's history

The Manchester Local Image Collection is a rich photographic record of Manchester, its people, streets and buildings. We have over 100,000 images of Manchester and Greater







We received £20,000 from Arts Council England Digital Libraries programme to develop a free educational resource for schools and the public on the Marcus Rashford archive. This collection of messages of support and anti-racism was created mostly by children following the Rashford mural in Withington being defaced with racist graffiti after the Euros in 2021. The collection highlights local lad Marcus Rashford as a role model due to his campaigning work relates to children and food poverty. The website launched in January 2026 and offers a free and engaging interactive resource which will be accessible to everyone <https://www.marcusrashfordmural.co.uk/>. Featuring themes that can be explored by the collection include empathy, anti-racist action, using your voice, contemporary history, preserving community heritage, its mixed media style includes film and audio recordings along with lesson resources which promote diverse voices. The resource includes a video introduction from Carl Anka who co-writes Marcus Rashford's children's books. This will enable us to continue engagement with the collection which has already happened with many schools including Beaver Road.



The busy Archives and Local Studies events programme has included displaying original archives at the popular Manchester Town Hall Restoration lecture series. The talks have been complemented by the exhibitions relating to Manchester Town Hall in Central Library. There have been numerous tours, talks and engagement events with Manchester Town Hall former staff members and local heritage societies.

Archives is a key partner in a range of projects including the George House Trust which was successfully awarded £150k to catalogue and preserve the archive with help from local volunteers and celebrate 40 years of HIV activism in Manchester with a range of events including the major exhibition at Central Library. We are also partnering with Manchester Histories Festival in facilitating Queer Up North's successful £250k award to preserve and celebrate the rich LGBTQ+ heritage of Manchester, focusing on the Queer Up North (QUN) festivals held between 1992 and 2002. This will feature digitisation, sound archive creation and a programme of events and activities, bringing one of the most significant LGBTQIA+ collections in the UK to life and out into the city for a wider audience.



**The Manchester Histories Hub**, in the lower ground floor of Manchester Central Library, has been developing as a centre for heritage & wellbeing, and also to promote the Hidden Network. This complements Manchester Histories work around the Histories Festival which takes place every two years, including a Histories and Heritage Marketplace event at Central Library.

The Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People were successful in their bid to the, Wellcome Trust in 2021, in partnership with Archives+, to catalogue, digitise and make accessible their Disabled People's Archive. The cataloguing of the collection is now complete. with highlights available at: <https://disabledpeoplesarchive.com/in-the-archive/>. GMCDP were successful in two bids in 2025, both of which are being run in partnership with Archives+. The first, from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, will support a 20-month project entitled "Accessing Our Hidden History-The Disabled People's Archive". This project aims to connect disabled people to their heritage, as well

as to promote the existence of the Disabled People's Archive. The second, from The National Archives' Cataloguing Grant, will fund the 'Choice and Control' project. This project provides an opportunity to open up and catalogue previously restricted parts of the Disabled People's Archive, and is a chance to develop our understanding of the history of the Independent Living Movement and its influence on the Disabled People's Movement.



Photograph of a GMCDP staff member wearing a badge that says 'Rights not Charity'.

1980 to 2000



Poor quality photograph of two members of GMCDP. They are looking at each other and smiling.

1980 to 2000



Photograph of several young disabled people taking part in a music activity. They are all gathered around a bongo drum. On the wall in the background are four large sheets of paper listing the various rights to which disabled people are entitled.

1993 to 1995



Photograph of two young disabled people smiling and showing off their art work.

1993 to 1995



Photograph of a young wheelchair user showing off their artwork.

1990 to 2000



Photograph of a group of eight young people, three of whom are wheelchair users, sat and stood around two drums. Two of those standing each hold one drum stick.

1990 to 2000



Photograph of a young wheelchair user showing off their artwork.

1990 to 2000

The Manchester and Lancashire Family History run a Monday-Friday family history helpdesk at Manchester Central Library. During the last year the Helpdesk welcomed 2,140 visitors in total. This included 839 short enquiries, and 1,301 longer enquiries, where visitors were given extended assistance, often including computer access and supported research time. In August, when Central Library was closed, the society offered support at 8 other libraries.

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre and Education Trust's work is more important than ever with the need to fight racism and promote community cohesion. The Trust receives funding from Manchester City Council, and is an important Archives+ partner.

Last year, they worked with 1,220 young people across 16 schools and youth organisations, training 19 PGCE History trainees, and producing 10 collection-based resources.

Throughout 2025, the 80th anniversary of the 5th Pan-African Congress in Manchester provided the focus for much of their public engagement work, collaborating with cultural

partners throughout the year on numerous events, engagement sessions and exhibitions, and the programme culminated with an event on Black histories and the 1945 Pan-African Congress, featuring Gary Younge, exploring how this history informs contemporary anti-racism and anti-fascism work.

Work continues on the National Lottery Heritage Fund project (Community-Led Collecting: Fit for the Future) to improve digital resilience and collection accessibility, which concludes in March 2026.

The Education Trust (AIUET) became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, strengthening governance and legal compliance, and welcomed new Trustees.

## Appendix 13 – Green Libraries

Manchester Libraries have signed up to the Green Libraries Manifesto, which places low-carbon at the heart of service delivery

[www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=greenlibrariesmanifesto](http://www.cilip.org.uk/general/custom.asp?page=greenlibrariesmanifesto).

Manchester libraries estate contains generally good quality buildings with excellent carbon emission standards, and the capital investment into several of the libraries improves this further. This includes Chorlton Library which benefitted from a major transformation and restoration this year.

By widening use of libraries as community hubs, we are preventing the need for other services and organisations to have their own buildings and reducing travel time amongst staff and partner organisations. Neighbourhood libraries are accessible for partners as workplaces and for service delivery, supporting the Our Manchester and Bringing Services Together approaches.

Libraries are used for environmental and climate change campaigns, including Keep Manchester Tidy, which itself contributes towards carbon emission reductions.

Each library is a collection point for old devices. These get refurbished by Community Computers and given at low cost or no cost to Manchester residents - benefiting the resident and reducing waste.

Every library offers paper and card recycling to residents, and gives out green food waste bags.

Central Library café is now part of the [Bee Cup reusable cup scheme](#), allowing customers to bring their cup into the café.

Libraries are an extremely green service by the nature. Libraries are possibly the longest standing re-use and recycling programme through the borrow and use of a book by multiple people. The increase in lending of Ebooks and Eaudio books reduces the carbon footprint of reading in the city still further.

We held several sessions promoting the Roundview resource – for example as a summer activity and during the libraries staff conference. Roundview is an interactive resource that is a framework designed to help answer the question: how do we know if a decision or action is likely to move us towards a sustainable future.

We were awarded £10k funding as part of the Culture Nature England project in early 2025. Through this funding we have introduced seed libraries to 8 libraries. We have also delivered a range of creative activities, for example the promotion of nature walks to three local nature reserves - Boggart Hole Clough, Highfield Country Park and Wythenshawe Park. Libraries have run associated activities, for example at Didsbury Library there was a green storytime in August with seed planting, to highlight and encourage environmental literacy.

"Flying the Flag for Green Libraries" is a Greater Manchester wide project creating 10 bespoke, naturally dyed silk flags representing local environmental themes.

Produced with [Cabasa Carnival Arts](#), these flags are touring all 10 local authorities,. Gorton Library hosted a workshop in October where Manchester's Green Flag was created. All 10 flags will appear at Gorton Library in July, before appearing at the Manchester Day parade.



The flags workshop at Gorton was part of our Green Libraries Week celebrations. <https://manclibraries.blog/sowing-the-seeds-of-change/>. Additional events included a mindful walk from Arcadia Library around Highfield Park, Seed library craft sessions, daffodil planting, and Halloween cress heads sessions for families.



**Green  
Libraries  
Week**

## **Appendix 14 - Testimonials of Manchester Libraries customers given at the Libraries 175 Conference at Manchester Central Library in October 2025, to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Public Libraries Act**

***First we hear from Frances Bradley, who attends the Central Library Digital Drop-In Centre and explains how she has personally, and financially, benefitted from the service.***

To start with, I care passionately about the drop-in centre and I have been attending for a number of years because when I started computing I had, I started from a very low base and had no skills whatsoever and quickly found after my husband died that I needed to actually access my pension and then access other things as we moved on. And in the early days I was really scared about having my ID stolen and my tutors gave me the confidence and if you like the protection to handle that. And then over the years I've obviously started online banking and have an Amazon account and can deal with the likes of Scottish Power and Sky and HMRC, and David, my beloved tutor, has actually helped me save hundreds of pounds. I care passionately that people of my age group, the 70 year olds, especially women, need to be, have social inclusion and empowerment and instead of being at home scared to death about what life is going to, if you like, throw at them because we are becoming more and more digitised as it were and we are having to face up to these issues and without the drop-in centre I would have actually been at home quite terrified.

So that is how I feel about the drop-in centre. It has given me an ability to live my life, as it were, to the full.

\*\*\*\*\*

***Second, we hear from Emily, who is now a Literacy Champion volunteer with Read Manchester and she speaks about how libraries such as Withington and Didsbury have helped and inspired both her and her children.***

Withington Library had previously been a place where I would sit and attempt to do my university work while endlessly procrastinating.

However, jumping forward to 2019, I'd seen advertised that they had a story time for babies and toddlers. It was free and we thought that we'd give it a try. This weekly story time turned into a regular Wednesday slot for us.

My daughter would love the stories, puppets and bubbles and I would sit and very cautiously hum along to the nursery rhymes that were being sung. But it wasn't just about story time and the bubbles, it was a chance to meet other local parents. Chatting to another adult over maternity leave always put a spring in my step.

It was nice to chat again to those same people later in the week when you would see them in the local play park. Quickly the library then became a place where we'd go on other days of the week too. It was important for me to be about out and about, and my daughter needed space to first crawl and then run around with me chasing after her. We are very lucky in Withington Library there's a play tent and comfortable toys.

It is important that people have somewhere warm, comfortable, accessible and free to go on a cold wet day. Two years later in 2021 we were joined on our library visits by my second daughter. A lot of this time caring for two young children is very much a blur, but I have photos on my phone of both my children at Withington Library in their double pram so apparently it did happen.

This huge double pram would also just about fit on the bus so we would find ourselves in Didsbury and Chorlton Library too as their libraries were on different days of the week. As my children have got older into their preschool years, borrowing books at the library then became a fun way of getting them into reading. They both have now have their own library cards.

My youngest daughter always opted for anything with a dinosaur or a cat on the cover. My eldest daughter, who at one time loved 'A Tiger Who Came To Tea' and 'Mog', now hunts down chapter books that transport us from the Manchester Libraries to worlds far away.

More recently we've become regular members of the library Lego clubs. We can head to Burnage or Didsbury Library on a Saturday morning and make our own Lego creations with a vast amount of Lego on offer. As with story time from a few years ago this is a place where we can be warm, comfortable, my children are entertained and I'm out and about chatting to new people. I'm now a literacy champion for Read Manchester.

\*\*\*\*\*

***And lastly, we hear from local businessmen and global entrepreneur Ricky Leung, who talks about the world class experience he has received through the BIPC services at Central Library.***

This is Ricky and I'm a global trader of food and also a restaurant operator in different parts of the world. Manchester is actually the latest initiative for me, which is a startup restaurant here with Malaysian inspired cuisine. It is great to have the help of the Build A Business team of the Central Library here. After a workshop I felt so fascinated about the support and then it has been a very nice occasion for me to learn about the resources that the Central Library can give us as a startup business entrepreneur and in knowing more about the market and also about our customers in Manchester.

I also joined the pop-up market organised by the Build A Business team as well and I got the chance to talk to my end customers and know more about the market. Especially I want to thank the build a business team really, especially Mr Jonathan Ebbs for his support and also his team for his support and organisation of different events. That has been really helpful to me, and I feel like Manchester and the Central Library has the best support to startup business in the world.

I mean it because I have never experienced something like this before in other parts of the world in my adventure.

\*\*\*\*\*

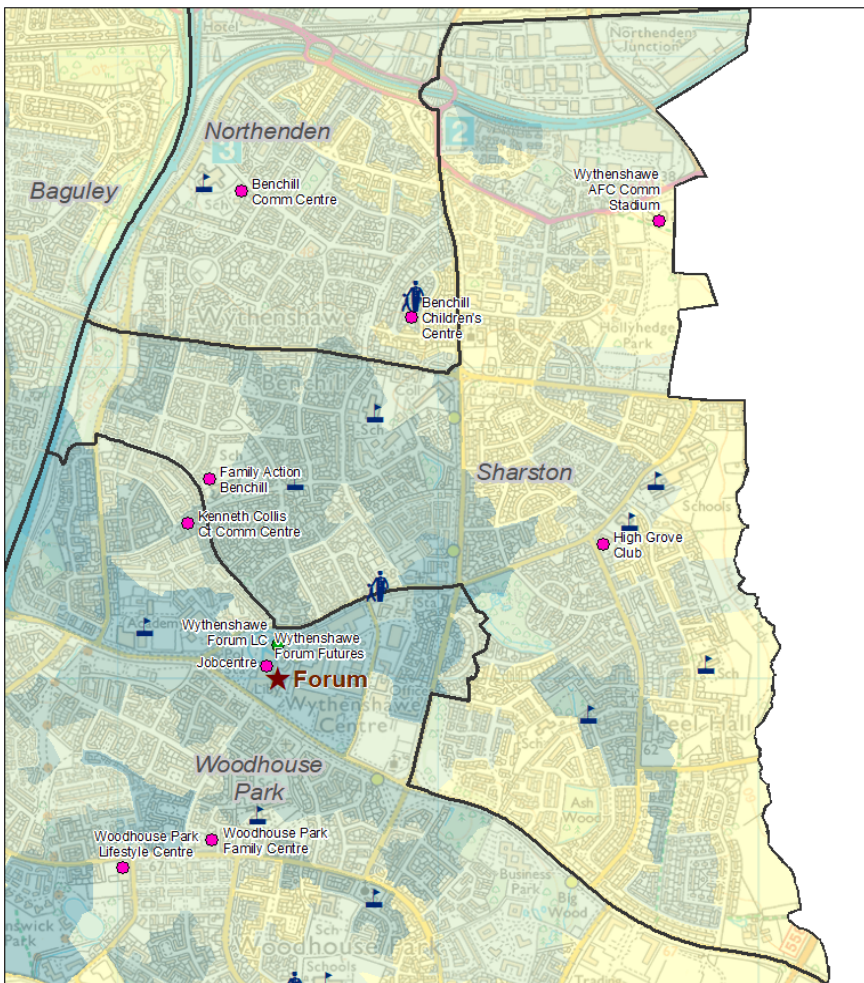


# Ward Engagement Plan Sharston Ward



Ward Councillors	Neighbourhood Officers:	Nearest Libraries
Cllr Thomas Judge	Andy Clarke	Forum Library (not in ward)
Cllr Emma Taylor	Andy Young	Northenden
Cllr Tim Whiston	Sharon Summers	
Community Development Officers:		

## Map: Library Usage & Community, Cultural, Leisure and Education Settings



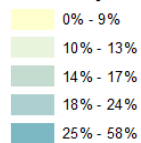
Percentage of residents who are active library users  
March 2025

Ward: Sharston

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2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000812035  
Map produced by PRI Place

### Legend

% Residents who are Library Users



- ★ Library
- CultureCommLeisure
- Leisure\_Facilities
- 🏫 School
- 👨‍👩‍👧 Family\_Hub

## Ward Facts

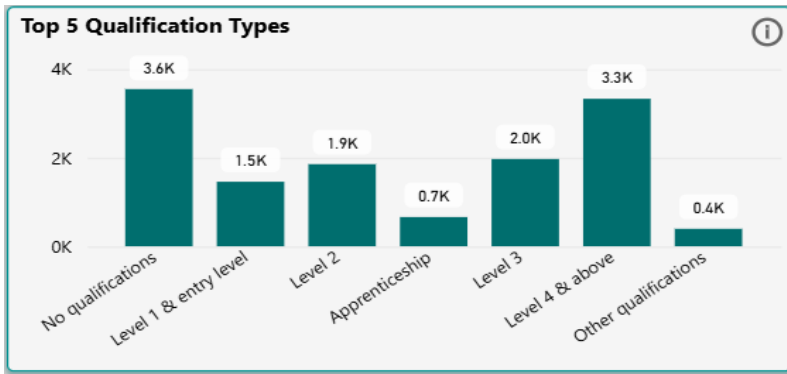
### Age breakdown (selected ward)

● 4 years and under ● 5 to 15 years ● 16 to 24 years ● 25 to 34 years ● 35 to 49 years ● 50 to 64 years ● 65 and over



Manchester

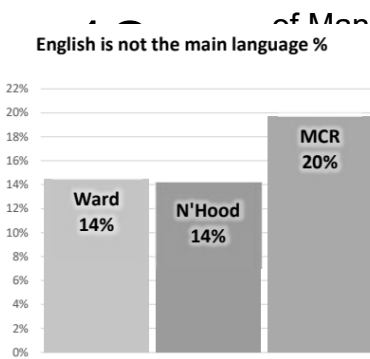
Total Population 2021



Active users living in ward

Area	IMD Score 2019	Digital Exclusion score (0 = low risk of digital exclusion)	% in fuel poverty
Baguley	46.1	23	12%
Sharston	48.3	30	14%
Woodhouse Park	50.6	32	14%
<b>Manchester</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17%</b>

IMD: the higher the score the more deprived the ward is



Total Population/ Benefit Claimants	Residents claiming benefits (excl. tax credits and child benefit)	Residents claiming out of work benefits	% residents claiming benefits (excl. tax credits and child benefit)	% residents claiming out of work benefits
Baguley	4,391	2,693	27%	16%
Sharston	4,926	2,965	28%	17%
Neighbourhood	14,122	8,587	28%	17%
<b>Manchester</b>	<b>127,801</b>	<b>78,136</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>14%</b>

Ward residents Library Usage

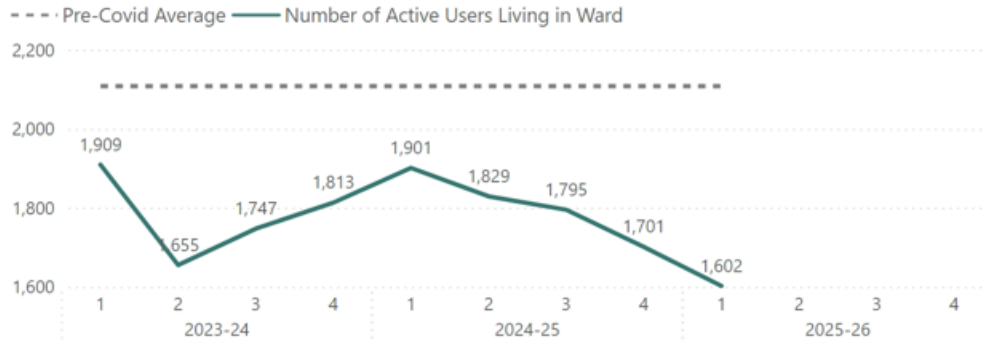
Percentage of residents in ward who are library users (based on Output Area)

### Libraries engagement in Sharston ward through events, sessions and activities (2022-25)

Ward	Library in ward	Number of sessions				Number of participants				Session in library or outreach			
		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% change	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% change	In library	Other venue	% in library	% other venue
Sharston		9	3	-	-100%	1,825	163	-	-100%	-	0	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,756</b>	<b>12,821</b>	<b>15,346</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>179,762</b>	<b>207,724</b>	<b>255,513</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>15,317</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>

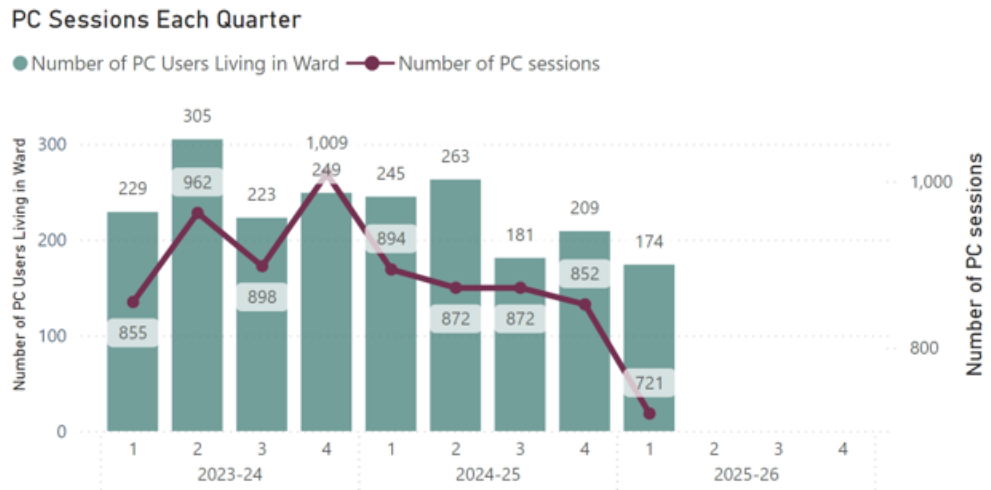
# Sharston Ward School Engagement

	No. state funded schools engaged			% of schools engaged			Number of sessions			Number of participants		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Sharston	6	4	6	100%	67%	100%	39	53	70	1,363	1,592	1,922
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>1112</b>	<b>1162</b>	<b>67,640</b>	<b>64,233</b>	<b>60,358</b>



**Library Users Living in the Ward: Rolling year**

- Active users: Pre covid **2,108**
- Active users living in ward **1,795**
- % residents who are library members **10.0%**
- SIM cards distributed to ward residents (December 24) **82**



## Schools Status - Financial Year April to March 2024/25

Name of school / educational establishment	Phase	Closest Library	Distance Straight Line (miles)	Distance Street Route (miles)	Time to walk (minute)	NOR (Jan 2024)	% Free School Meal	Number of Sessions			Number of participants			No. library teams engaged with school
								2023/24	2024/25	Status (Based on financial year)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	
Crossacres Primary Academy	Primary	Forum	0.9	1.9	36.8	707	47	0	5	Engaged this year	288	0	401	2
Haveley Hey Community School	Primary	Forum	0.4	0.4	8.0	473	69	9	8	Engaged this year	316	654	283	2
Peel Hall Primary School	Primary	Forum	0.8	1.1	21.0	0	0	11	15	Engaged this year	326	288	488	2
St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary School	Primary	Forum	0.6	1.3	25.0	235	35	0	2	Engaged this year	41	0	128	1
St John Fisher and Thomas More	Primary	Forum	0.6	1.6	31.0	371	46	6	3	Engaged this year	179	184	212	2
Ashgate Specialist Support Primary	Special	Forum	0.8	1.0	19.0	155	59	27	37	Engaged this year	213	466	410	2

## Ward Activities – Spring 2026

<b>Category</b>	<b>Activity / Location</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Schools	Ashgate Specialist Support School	Mar 26	
Schools	Crossacres Primary	April 26	
Schools	Haverley Hey	TBC	
Schools	Peel Hall – Year 6	Mar 2 & Jun 8	
Schools	Peel Hall – Year 5	Spring Term (TBC)	
Schools	Peel Hall – Year 3	Spring Term (TBC)	
Schools	St. Elizabeths	TBC	
Schools	St. John Fisher & Thomas Moore	TBC	
Community Spaces	Crossacres Family Hub	Events at Family Hub in Feb TBC	



# Ward Engagement Plan Harpurhey Ward

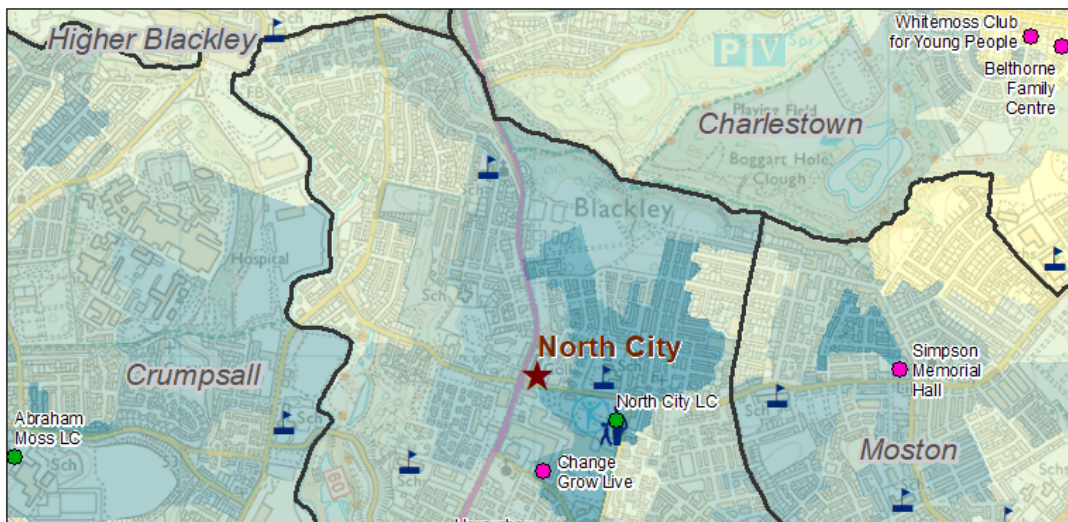
Community Spaces	The Message – Coffee Mornings	Weds & Fri 10–12 (TBC)	
Community Spaces	Age Friendly Coffee Morning Visit	TBC	
Community Spaces	Mini Library (Village 135)	Restock Planned	
Community Spaces	Creative Space – Rock School, Youth Theatre, Cinema	Ongoing	
Community Spaces	Wythenshawe FC	Explore Pre-Match Visit	
Community Spaces	Benchill Community Centre	Outreach Discussion	
Community Spaces	Crossacres Family Hub	Regular Activities Planned	
Community Spaces	Village 135	Mini Library Promotion	
Community Spaces	Age UK Crossacres	TBC	
Connectors	WCHG – Presence at All	Next: Feb 25th @ Northenden Social Club; Health Focus	
Connectors	Team Around the Neighbourhood	May 6 <sup>th</sup> location TBC	
Creative Space	Rock School	ongoing	
Creative space	Wythenshawe Youth Theatre	ongoing	
Creative Space	BLOCK cinema	ongoing	
Forum Events	Author	TBC	
Forum Events	People in Place	Filming Feb 26	

Ward Councillors	Neighbourhood Officers:
Pat Karney	Simon Kitchin
Joanne Green	Kate Tite
Sandra Collins	

Nearest Libraries
North City (in ward)



**Map: Library Usage & Community, Cultural, Leisure and Education Settings**



## Ward Facts

Total Population 2021

**19,997**

Population growth from 2011 Census

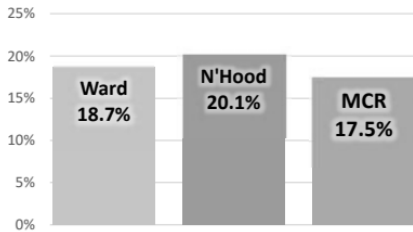
% change

**15.3%**

Count change

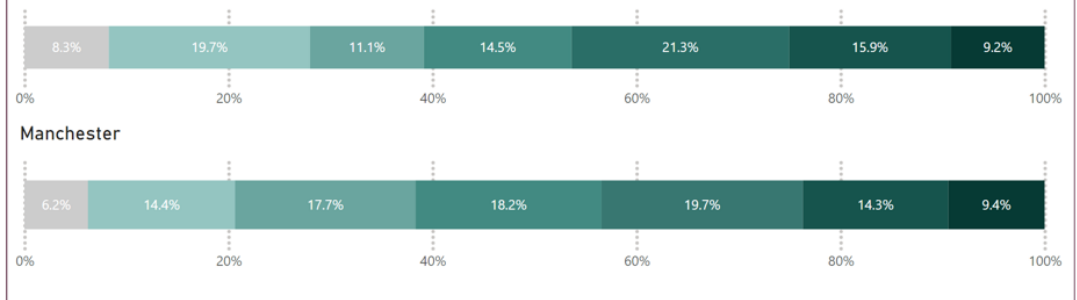
**2,654**

Disabled under the Equality Act %



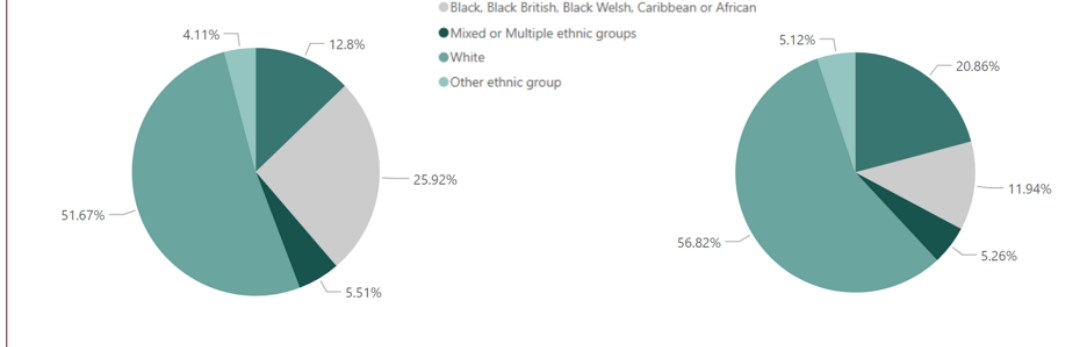
### Age breakdown (selected ward)

● 4 years and under ● 5 to 15 years ● 16 to 24 years ● 25 to 34 years ● 35 to 49 years ● 50 to 64 years ● 65 and over

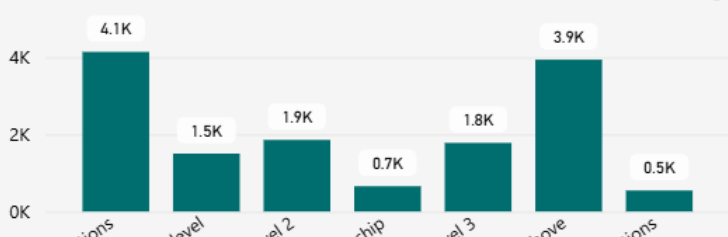


### Ethnicity breakdown (selected ward)

● Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh  
 ● Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African  
 ● Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups  
 ● White  
 ● Other ethnic group



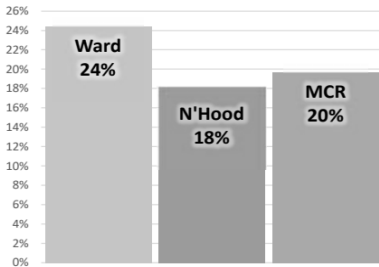
### Top 5 Qualification Types



Area	IMD Score 2019	Digital Exclusion score (0 = low risk of digital exclusion)	% in fuel poverty
Charlestown	48.4	25	14%
Harpurhey	59.1	28	19%

IMD: the higher the score the more deprived the ward is

English is not the main language %



Total Population/ Benefit Claimants	Residents claiming benefits (excl. tax credits and child benefit)	Residents claiming out of work benefits	% residents claiming benefits (excl. tax credits and child benefit)	% residents claiming out of work benefits
Charlestown	4,851	2,903	27%	16%
Harpurhey	6,798	4,312	34%	22%
Neighbourhood	16,152	9,899	30%	18%
<b>Manchester</b>	<b>127,801</b>	<b>78,136</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>14%</b>

## Ward Residents - Library Usage Active users living in ward

Library Users Living in the Ward:  
Rolling\_year

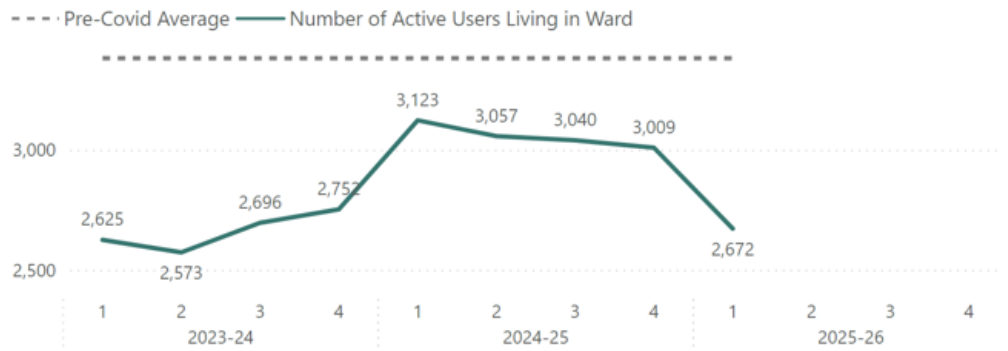
Active users: Pre covid  
**3,382**

Active users living in ward  
**2,672**

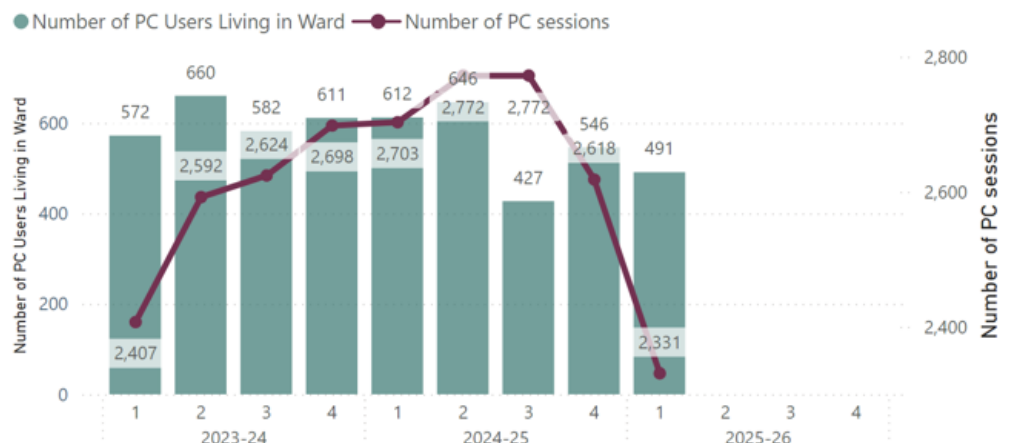
% residents who are library members  
**13.3%**

---

SIM cards distributed to ward residents  
(December 24)  
**378**



PC Sessions Each Quarter



### Percentage of residents in ward who are library users (based on Output Area)

**13** of ward residents are library members

**12** of Manchester residents are library members

### Libraries engagement in Harpurhey ward through events, sessions and activities (2022-25)

Ward	Library in ward	Number of sessions				Number of participants				Session in library or outreach			
		2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% change	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% change	In library	Other venue	% in library	% other venue
Harpurhey	North City	396	558	589	6%	7,403	9,141	7,373	-19%	589	0	100%	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,756</b>	<b>12,821</b>	<b>15,346</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>179,762</b>	<b>207,724</b>	<b>255,513</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>15,317</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>

## Ward School Engagement (based on schools in ward)

	No. state funded schools engaged			% of schools engaged			Number of sessions			Number of participants		
	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Harpurhey	6	5	7	67%	56%	78%	35	27	40	3,201	1,153	2,023
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>1112</b>	<b>1162</b>	<b>67,640</b>	<b>64,233</b>	<b>60,358</b>

### Schools Status - Financial Year April to March

2024/25

Name of school / educational establishment	Phase	Ward	Postcode	Closest Library	Distance Straight Line (miles)	Distance Street Route (miles)	Time to walk (minutes)	State Funded	NOR (Jan 2024)	% Free School Meal	Number of Sessions			Number of participants			
											2023/24	2024/25	Financial Year: Last Engaged	Status (Based on financial year)	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Holy Trinity CofE Primary School	Primary	Harpurhey	M9 4DU	North City	0.2	0.2	4.2	Y	469	58	1	16	2024/25	Engaged this year	256	96	758
Manchester Communications Pri	Primary	Harpurhey	M9 5QN	North City	0.6	0.8	15.4	Y	461	59	5	1	2024/25	Engaged this year	988	132	70
Mount Carmel RC Primary Schoo	Primary	Harpurhey	M9 8BG	North City	0.3	0.4	7.4	Y	454	36	7	8	2024/25	Engaged this year	573	363	512
Oasis Academy Harpur Mount, Ha	Primary	Harpurhey	M9 5XR	North City	0.3	0.4	7.4	Y	444	60	0	1	2024/25	Engaged this year	0	0	66
Saviour CofE Primary School	Primary	Harpurhey	M40 7RH	Miles Platting	0.7	0.9	17.6	Y	160	58	8	6	2024/25	Engaged this year	676	278	321
St Augustine's CofE Primary Schc	Primary	Harpurhey	M40 8PL	Miles Platting	0.7	1.1	21.4	Y	199	63	6	7	2024/25	Engaged this year	459	284	264
St Edmund's RC Primary School	Primary	Harpurhey	M40 8NG	North City	0.8	1.0	19.7	Y	244	53	0	1	2024/25	Engaged this year	249	0	32
St Malachy's RC Primary School	Primary	Harpurhey	M40 7RG	Miles Platting	0.7	0.9	17.8	Y	233	55	0	0	2021/22	Last engaged in 2021/22	0	0	0

# Ward Activities – Spring 2026

Category	Activity / Location	Date(s)	Notes
Schools	Holy Trinity Primary	Mar/April 26	
Schools	Manchester Comms Primary	April 26	
Schools	Mount Carmel	TBC	
Schools	Oasis Academy		
Schools	Saviour Primary	April 26	
Schools	St. Augustine's	Mar/April 26	
Schools	St. Edmunds	May 26	
Schools	St. Malachys	Awaiting conformation	Priority as not engaged recently
Community Spaces	Harpurhey Neighbourhood Project	Health week 22/3	Community cafe drop in
Community Spaces	Number 93	Health week 22/3	Community cafe drop in
Community Spaces	Youth Zone	tbc	
Community Spaces	Turkey Lane Monsall Community Centre	tbc	
Community Spaces	North Manchester FM	Outside Broadcast 21/3/26 North City Library	@ Neighbourhood project
Community Spaces	Harpurhey Bike Library	tbc	@ Number 93
Community Spaces	MSV Housing	April 26	Connector event being planned
Community Spaces	Boggart Hole Clough	Health Week 22/3	
Community Spaces	North City Library	International Mother Language day 21/2/26	
Connectors	Harpurhey Together	Feb 11 <sup>th</sup> 1030 at Oasis Academy	

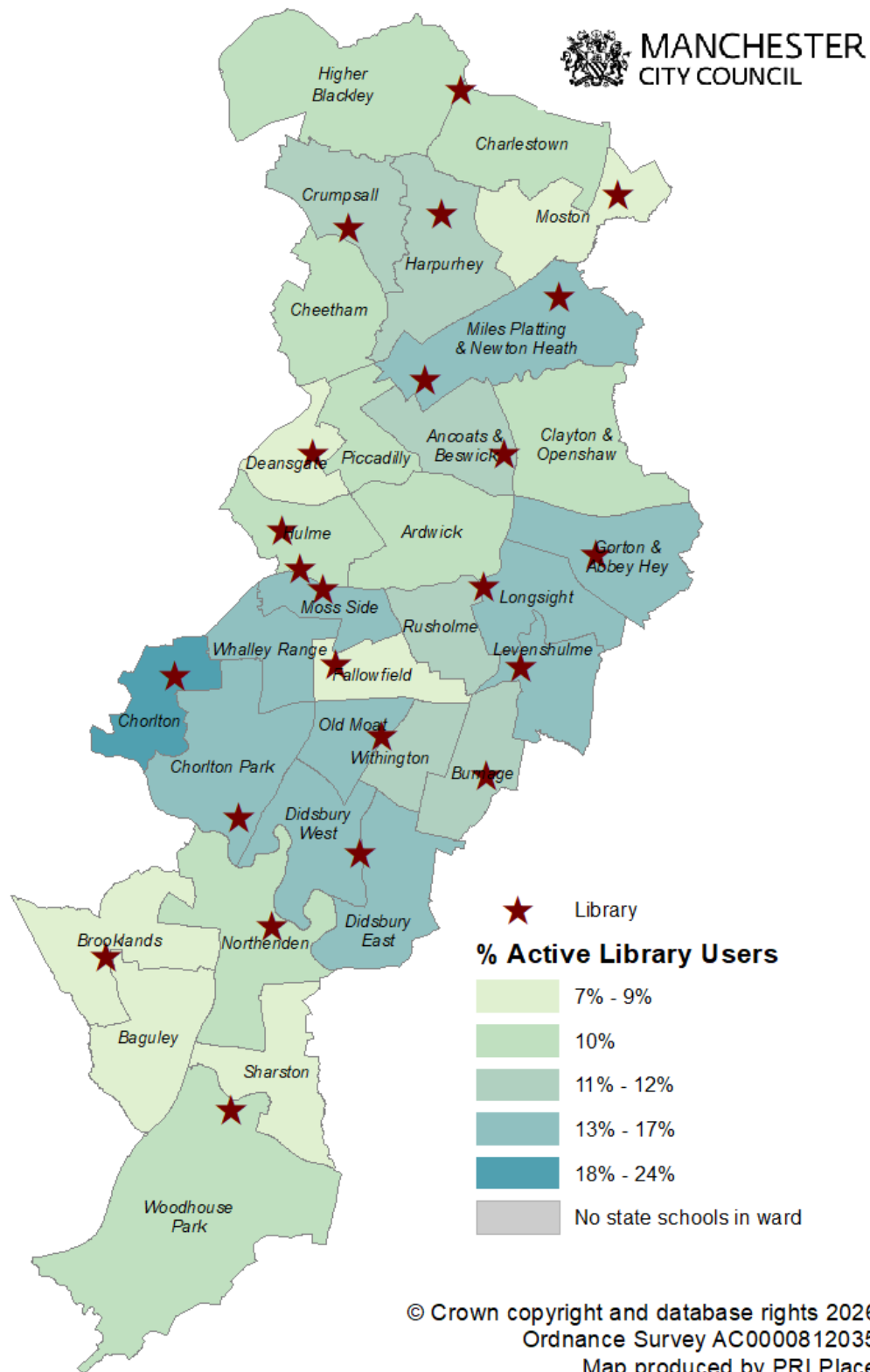
## Appendix 16 - Manchester Libraries Performance

Covering period January to December 2025

	Visits	Loans	Active Members (borrowed stock and/or used PC)	Education Session (participants)	Events and Activities (attendees)	PC Usage (hours recorded)	Wi-Fi (authenticated sessions)
<b>BRANCHES</b>							
Abraham Moss	230,089	30,435	6,246	293	15,049	13,730	58,801
Arcadia	85,405	26,529	2,530	3,158	4,551	11,365	110,905
Avenue	60,229	16,138	2,685	868	8,304	10,753	12,410
Barlow Moor	3,424	715	131	-	41	1,447	11,277
Beswick	44,172	10,097	2,240	629	4,768	5,798	35,453
Brooklands	24,609	13,369	1,138	188	5,090	3,191	14,671
Burnage	27,597	9,062	1,175	563	5,175	1,169	6,588
Central Library	1,317,030	102,674	27,902	23,298	90,346	116,051	443,613
Chorlton	98,589	66,890	8,065	1,702	9,270	7,717	25,097
Didsbury	116,830	53,723	5,928	1,051	5,979	8,553	28,018
Fallowfield	80,381	5,602	1,412	619	32,443	3,674	13,333
Forum	153,299	38,165	5,377	3,319	31,857	21,611	59,838
Gorton	96,011	22,107	3,887	1,431	16,418	19,533	32,296
Hulme High St	131,285	15,836	1,864	128	4,859	13,793	56,245
Longsight	217,973	29,805	6,483	2,355	18,952	25,602	44,852
Miles Platting	6,358	2,384	404	217	1,417	315	1,205
Moss Side Powerhouse	26,087	9,223	1,902	1,587	5,609	11,121	14,088
New Moston	4,208	1,875	483	-	1,115	532	3,122
Newton Heath	74,707	9,271	2,241	1,567	11,757	8,391	16,387
North City	59,629	13,303	3,376	199	7,023	10,211	29,761
Northenden	5,069	5,753	421	-	1,280	18	-
Withington	94,886	28,780	5,083	848	16,461	13,608	85,614
Z-Arts	18,791	2,327	211	30	848	-	2,579
<b>ONLINE / CITY-WIDE</b>							
Online / Telephone	-	193,009	101	-	-	-	-
E-Format: eBook / eAudiobook / ePress	-	879,048	-	-	-	-	-
Books to Go	-	51,291	600	-	-	-	-
Outreach (non library based sessions)	-	-	-	7,942	7,156	-	-
<b>Branch Totals</b>	<b>2,976,658</b>	<b>514,063</b>	<b>91,184</b>	<b>44,050</b>	<b>298,612</b>	<b>308,183</b>	<b>1,106,153</b>
<b>Total (including City-Wide)</b>	<b>2,976,658</b>	<b>1,637,411</b>	<b>91,885</b>	<b>51,992</b>	<b>305,768</b>	<b>308,183</b>	<b>1,106,153</b>

Central Library closed for 3 weeks in August due to Wi-Fi enhancement  
Chorlton Library in temporary library until April and open fully from August

# Percentage of residents who are active library users - January 2026



An active user is someone who in the last 12 months, has borrowed a book or used a library computer

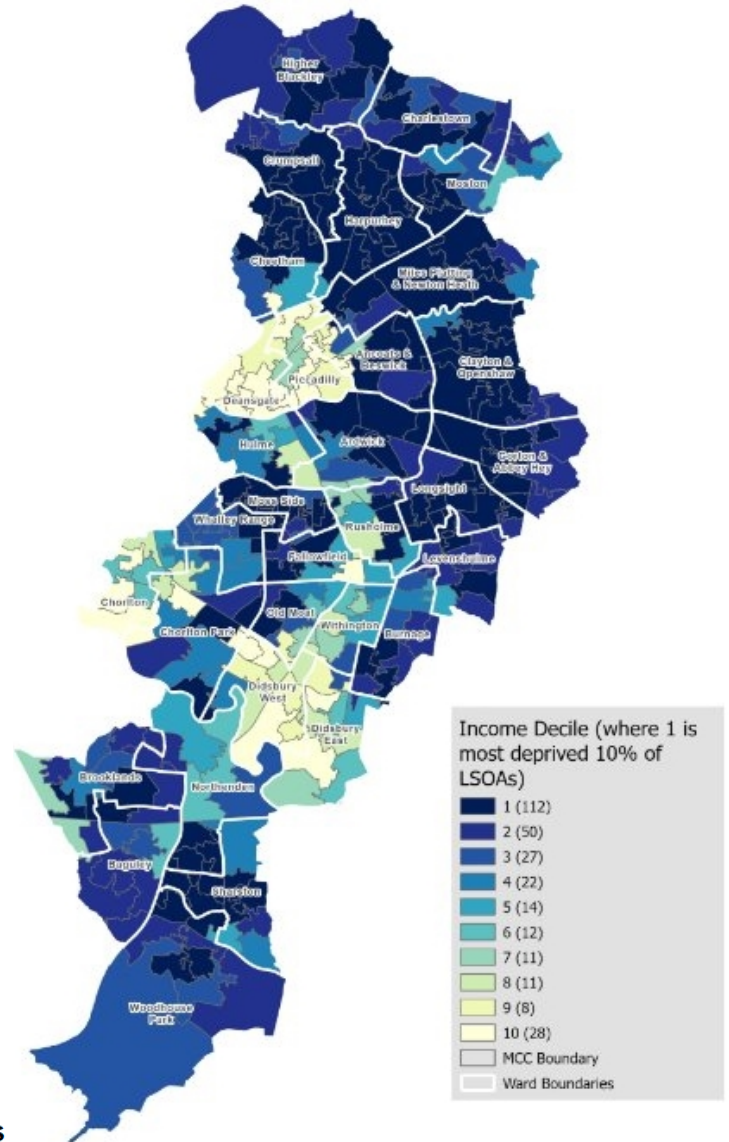
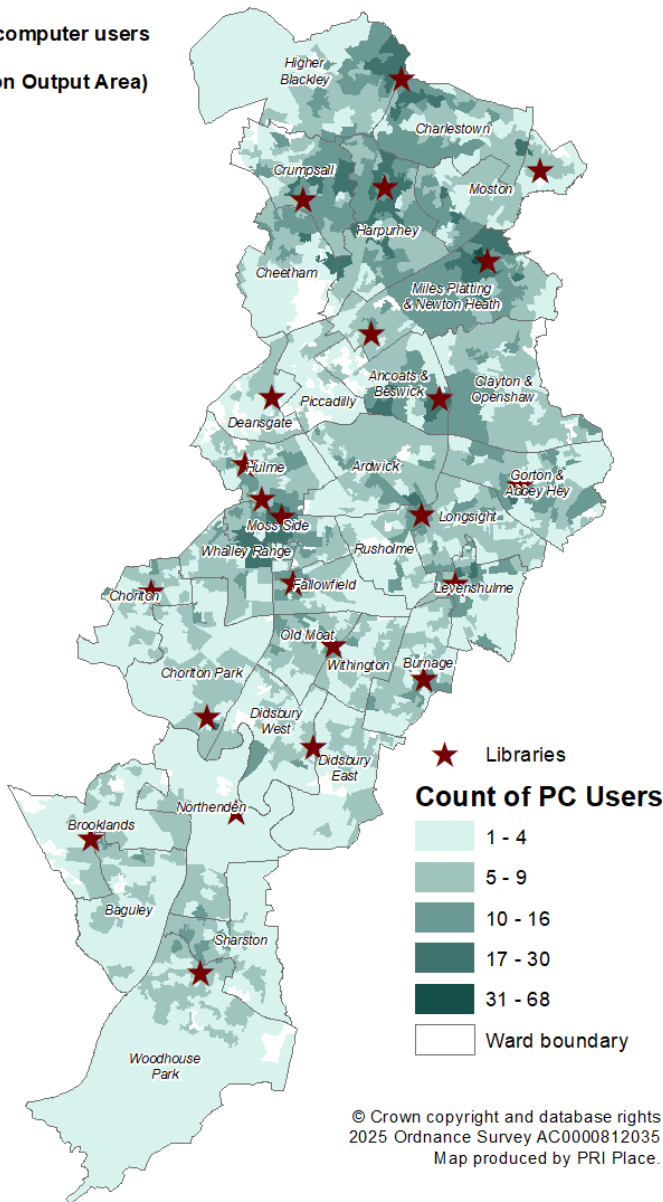
# Library computer users in 2025 with Index of Multiple Deprivation

The darker areas are similar on both maps, indicating that libraries computer users tend to live in the more deprived areas of the city.

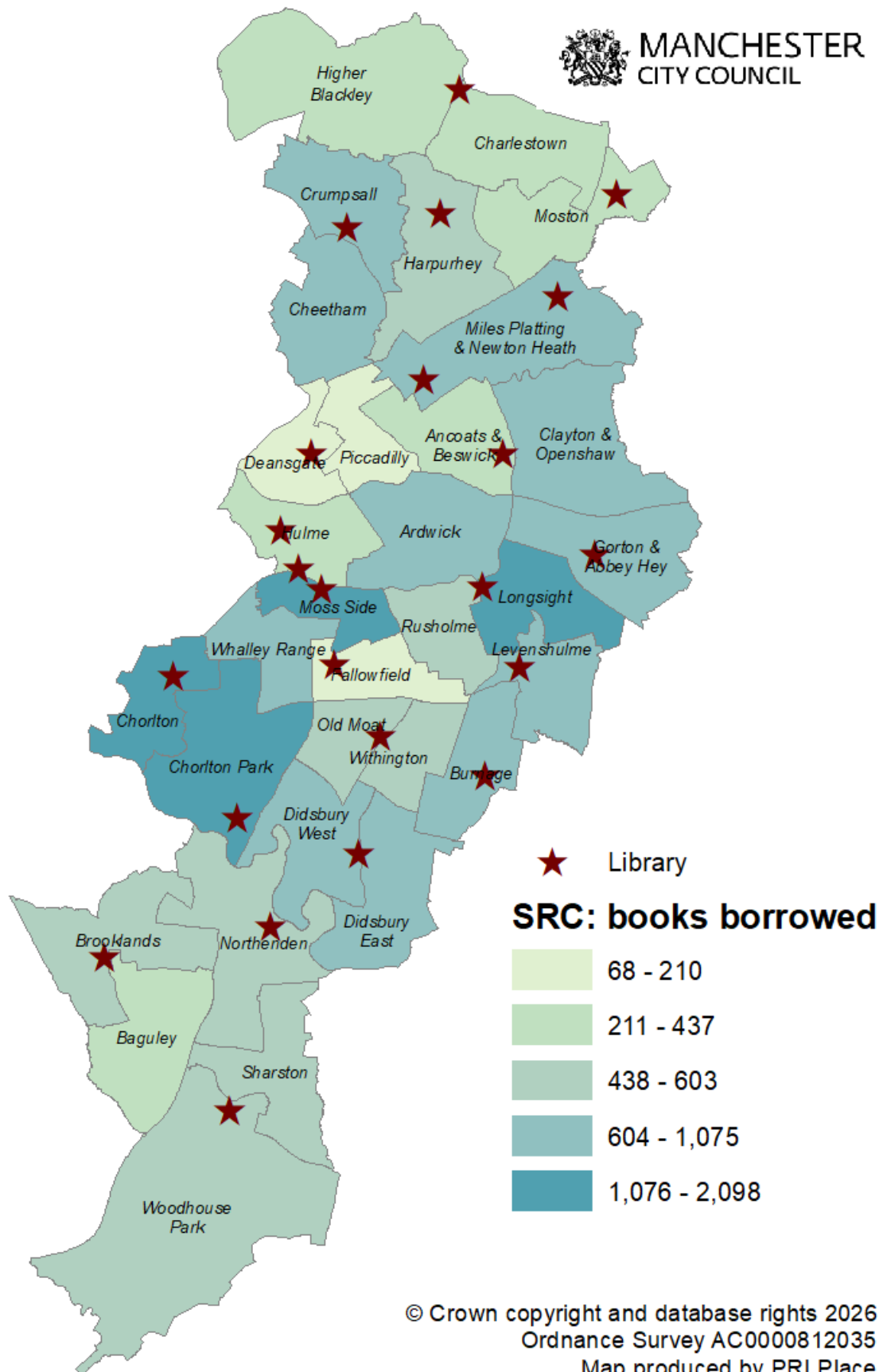
Index of Multiple Deprivation - Manchester City Council 2025



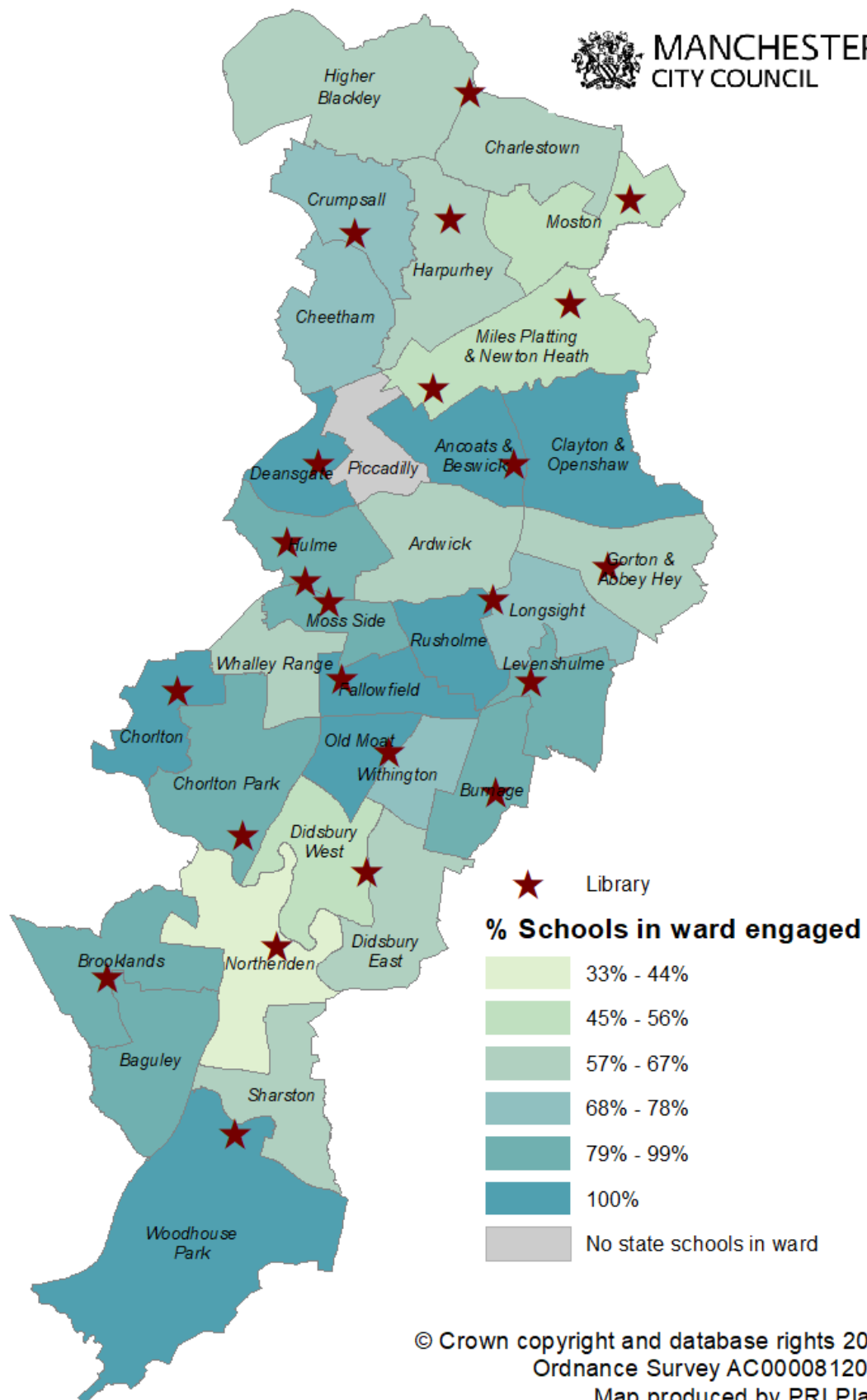
Library computer users 2025 (based on Output Area)



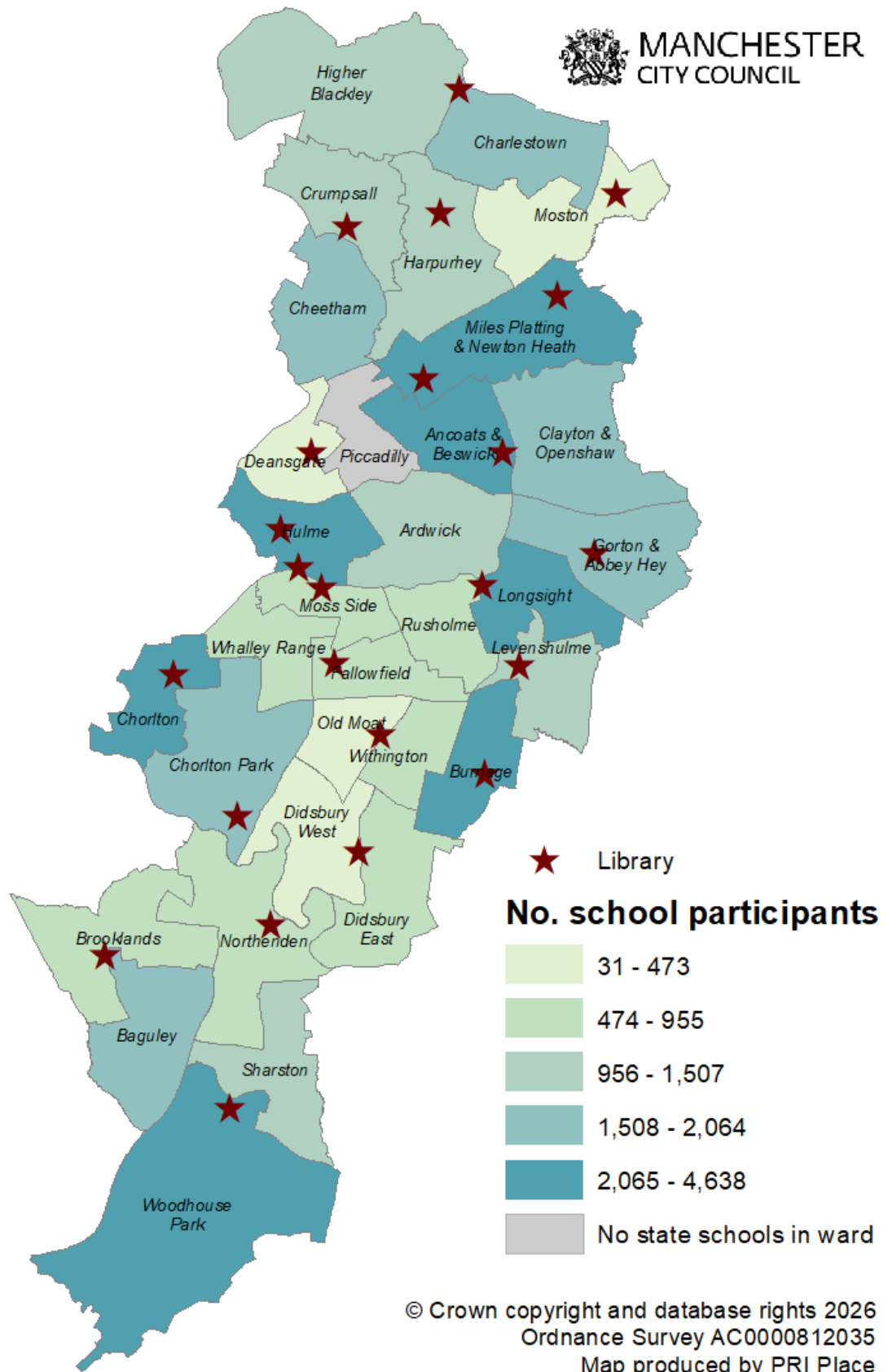
# Summer Reading Challenge 2025: Number of books borrowed



# School engagement: Percentage of schools in ward engaged with libraries in 2025



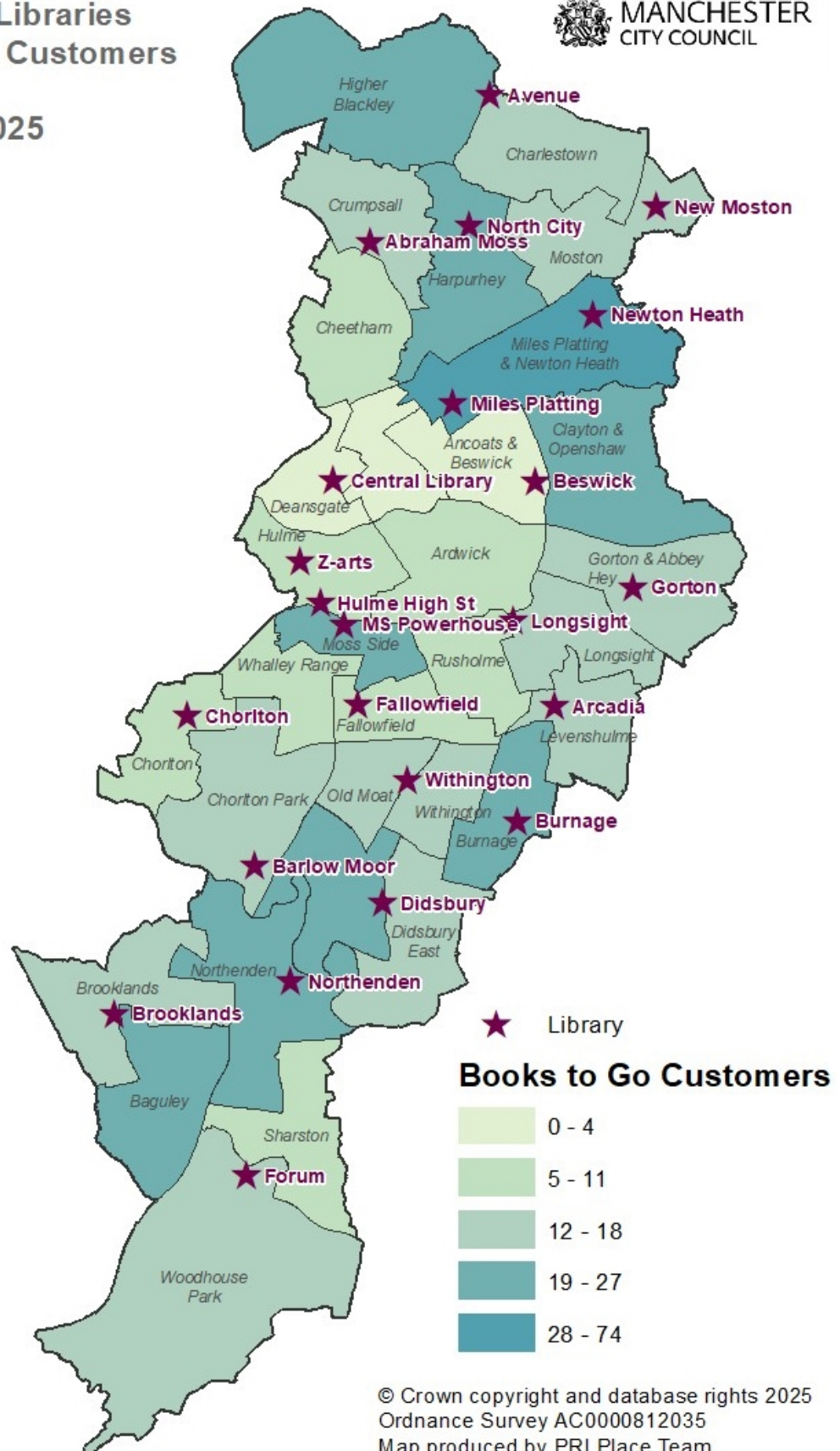
# School engagement: Number of participants in 2025



# Books to Go Customers in 2025

Manchester Libraries  
Books to Go Customers

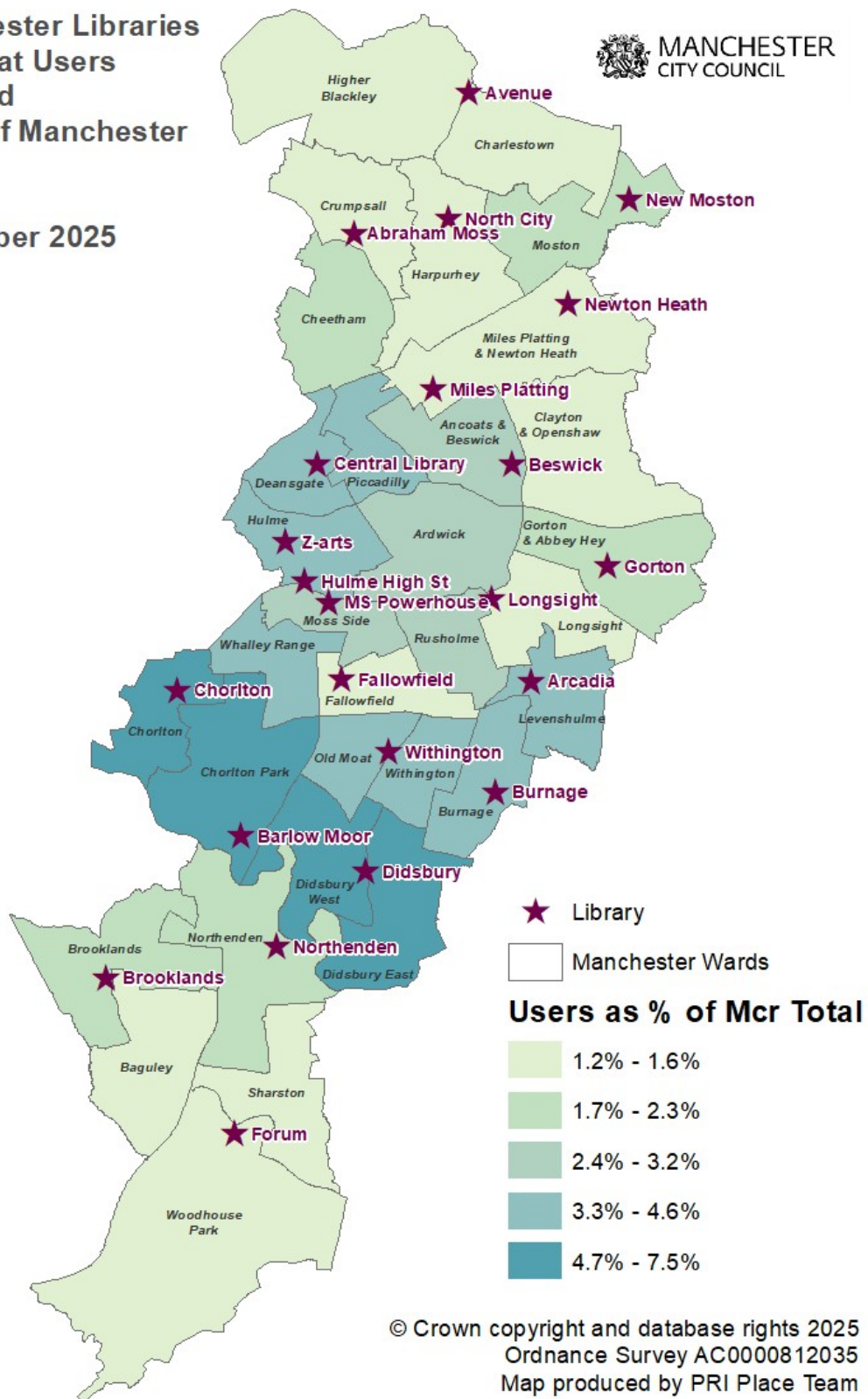
November 2025



# e-Format Customers in 2025

Manchester Libraries  
e-Format Users  
By Ward  
(as % of Manchester  
Total)

December 2025



This is ebooks, eaudio books, emagazines, enewspapers

# Manchester Libraries: Adult PLUS 2023 Results

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Analysis by PRI: Place  
May 2023

## Introduction

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The CIPFA Adult Public Library User Survey was carried out across all Manchester libraries during the week beginning 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023. 3182 questionnaires were received back, achieving a response rate of 71%, 3% lower than in 2020.

The survey consisted of 28 questions. Customers were invited to rate their satisfaction of the key areas of their library's service, including books, computers, and information services. A new section for 2023 focused on digital exclusion and asked how if at all respondents accessed the internet at home. The final part of the questionnaire related to demographic information about the customer. Customers were also given the opportunity to provide any comments for improving services, which will also be analysed and forwarded to the relevant managers in due course.

Some library results are not statistically viable; as when compared to the recorded library visits, there are too few responses to a question to get a reasonable sample for analysis. A total of 9 of the Manchester libraries received an error rating over 5% and therefore caution must be taken with these results. For example, Barlow Moor (18 responses), Abraham Moss (67 responses) and Fallowfield (54 responses) were amongst the libraries that cannot reliably be measured by this survey for any of the questions because of their low response rate.

Conclusions referenced in this report that are drawn from statistically unreliable results have been indicated with an asterisk\*.

In contrast to the last survey (2020) in which Arcadia and Hulme High Street, had the two highest response rates, a total of 6 libraries received over 95% response. In the 2023 survey, Burnage library led the response rate with 99% (82 surveys), followed by Didsbury with 96% (190 surveys). A further 4 libraries had a response rate of 95% (New Moston, Miles Platting, Brooklands & Avenue).

## Results Summary

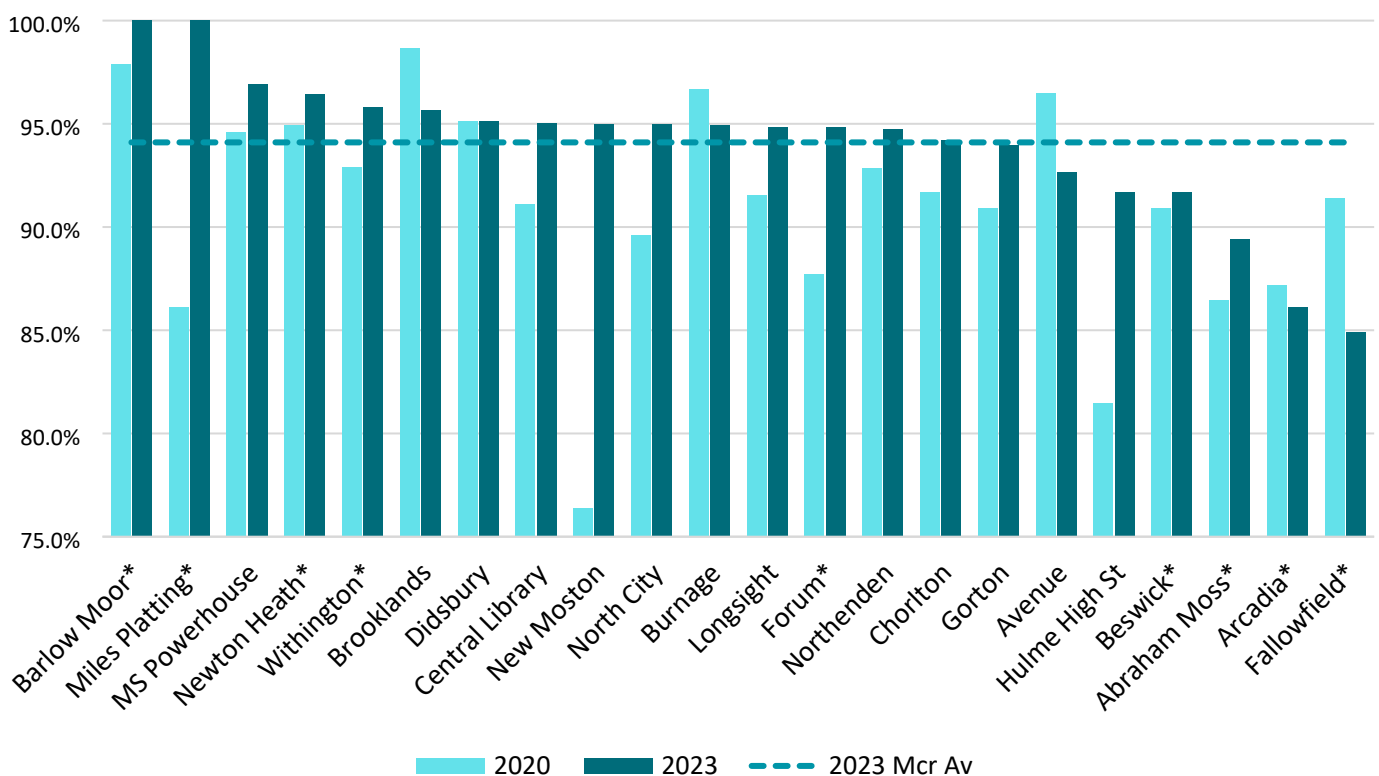
Customer satisfaction with their library – satisfaction is defined as users rating services as either good or very good.

Library	Number of Responses	2020	2023	% Change
Central Library	406	91.1%	95.0%	4%
Abraham Moss*	67	86.4%	89.4%	3%
Arcadia*	108	87.2%	86.1%	-1%
Avenue	139	96.5%	92.6%	-4%
Beswick*	49	90.9%	91.7%	1%
Brooklands	70	98.7%	95.7%	-3%
Chorlton	139	91.7%	94.2%	2%
Didsbury	190	95.1%	95.1%	0%
Forum*	298	87.7%	94.8%	7%
Gorton	170	90.9%	94.0%	3%
Hulme High St	188	81.5%	91.7%	10%
Longsight	377	91.5%	94.9%	3%
MS Powerhouse	68	94.6%	96.9%	2%
Newton Heath*	114	94.9%	96.4%	2%
North City	190	89.6%	95.0%	5%
Withington*	267	92.9%	95.8%	3%
Barlow Moor*	18	97.9%	100%	2%
Burnage	82	96.7%	94.9%	-2%
Fallowfield*	54	91.4%	84.9%	-6%
Miles Platting*	20	86.1%	100%	14%
New Moston	101	76.4%	95.0%	19%
Northenden	67	92.9%	94.7%	2%
Weighted total	<b>3,182</b>	<b>90.9%</b>	<b>94.1%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>2020 Results</b>	4,193		91%	
<b>% Change</b>	-24%		3%	

- ✓ The overall satisfaction rate for the city was 94.1%, compared to 90.9% in 2020. This 3% rise can be heavily attributed to the positive increases at library level from: New Moston (+19%), Miles Platting (+14%) and Hulme High Street (+10%).
- ✓ Miles Platting\* and Barlow Moor\* tied with the highest overall rating, with 100% of customers considering the libraries to be good or very good.
- ✓ Barlow Moor\* is the only library to have attained above 95% satisfaction in both 2020 and 2023.
- ✓ Positively, sixteen of the branches saw an increase in overall satisfaction rates.
- ✓ Didsbury was the only library to maintain their exact satisfaction rating.
- ✓ Fallowfield\* saw the biggest decrease in overall satisfaction, from 91% in 2020 to 84% in 2023.

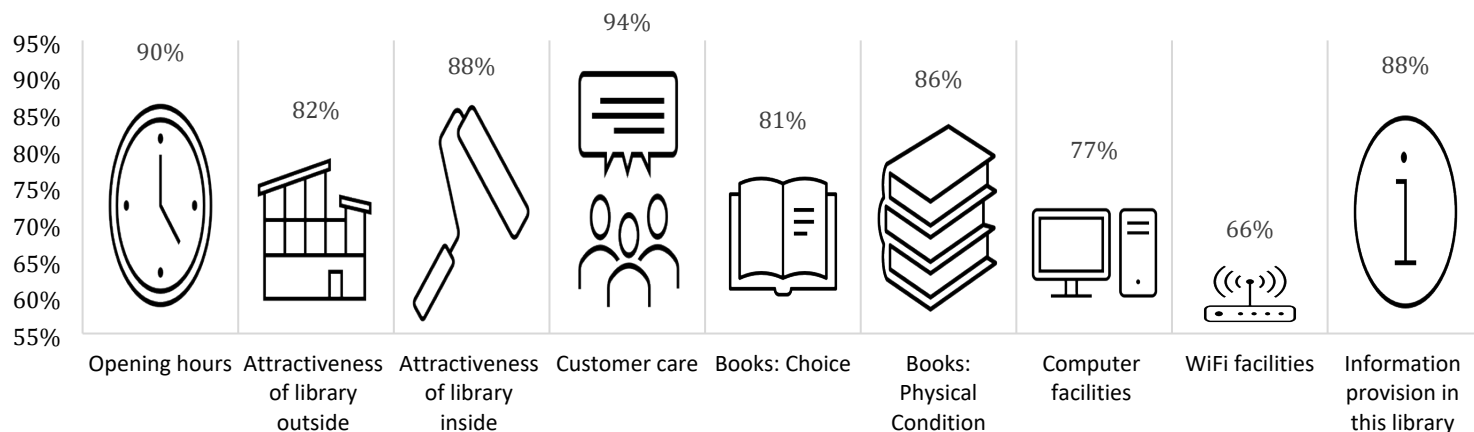
## Libraries: Overall

- The library with the most questionnaires completed was Central Library with 406 responses, followed by Longsight library with 377 responses.
- 15 libraries were above the Manchester weighted average for overall satisfaction of 94%, with Barlow Moor\* and Miles Platting\* having the highest proportion who felt the library overall was good or very good (100%).
- Encouraging progress in overall satisfaction levels can also be seen at New Moston and Miles Platting\*, increasing by 19% and 14%\* respectively, placing them both above Manchester’s 2020 average.
- There was also salient improvement in satisfaction from customers of Hulme High Street library, in which scores increased 10% from 81.5% to 91.7%.
- Fallowfield library recorded the lowest overall satisfaction level: 85% of respondents rated the library as good or very good, this was 6% decrease since 2020. However, it must be acknowledged that only 54 forms were completed.
- Of the libraries with statistic viability, Moss Side Powerhouse had the highest overall satisfaction ratings (97%). Of these libraries, the lowest overall satisfaction was Hulme High Street (92%), Avenue (93%) and Gorton (94%).
- Considering only the statistically viable results, the biggest decrease in satisfaction rates related to Avenue which dropped 4% to 92.6% from 96.5%.



## Key Areas of Satisfaction

In addition to their overall satisfaction customers were also asked to rate how they felt regarding nine key indicators which are listed in the chart below.



- ✓ 94% of customers rated **customer care** as good or very good. The city-wide average was 3% higher than the result from 2020. 18 out of the 22 libraries either improved or maintained their satisfaction rating in this area since 2020.
- ✓ Satisfaction with **opening hours** improved since 2020 with 90% (+4%) of customers considering them to be good or very good. This increase can be heavily attributed to the 46% increase in satisfaction regarding Miles Platting which jumped from 24% to 70%.
- ✓ Despite Barlow Moor\* having the lowest satisfaction rate for **opening hours** (49%), it improved by 4% when compared to the 2020 results.
- ✓ In an exact reflection of the previous survey (2020), 82% of customers reported their library's **external appearance** as very good or good. The highest satisfaction rate was for Gorton (94%) which improved 34% since 2020. This development reflects the introduction of the Gorton Hub building which opened in November 2022.
- ✓ 88% of customers reported the **internal appearance** as good or very good. This was a 4% increase since 2020. In comparison to the 2020 survey in which New Moston saw the biggest decline (-25% when compared to 2016), in 2023 it had the most improvement with satisfaction rising 19% to 76% overall. Miles Platting scored highest, with 100% of their respondents giving a positive rating.
- ✓ Satisfaction with **computers** declined from 78% to 77% city wide compared to 2020. Both Barlow Moor\* and Miles Platting\* scored highest of all branches, with 100% of respondents rating computers as good or very good. The 100% from Miles Platting was the biggest improvement, with satisfaction rising 18%. In contrast, Fallowfield\* scored the lowest (70%) and declined 14%.
- ✓ All libraries now offer free **Wi-Fi** and customers are invited to use their own devices. Overall satisfaction with the Wi-Fi decreased 4%. Miles Platting\* had the highest satisfaction rating (93%), and Burnage had the highest improvement (+17%). In a repeat of 2020 results, Central Library ranked lowest (59%), decreasing 6%.
- ✓ Across all indicators, **information provision** had the highest improvement rating since 2020. Satisfaction rose from 82% to 88%. Just 3 libraries, Didsbury (-8%), Barlow Moor\* (-1%) and Fallowfield (-9%) decreased in their scores. Moss Side Powerhouse scored the highest, with 98% of respondents rating positively.
- ✓ Customer satisfaction with the **choice of books** increased from 80% to 81%. Additionally, the **physical condition of books** improved from 82% to 86% of customers feeling satisfied. A big contribution to this rise can be attributed to North City which satisfaction with physical condition of the book stock rose 10%.

## Libraries: League Ranking

- Of all the key satisfaction questions, standard of customer care had the biggest proportion of respondents considering this to be good or very good (94%). Abraham Moss\*, Moss Side Powerhouse, Barlow Moor\*, Miles Platting\* and Northenden scored 100%.
- Across the 9 indicators Miles Platting ranked in the top three for seven of the satisfaction measures, however, it must be acknowledged that only 20 forms were completed.
- Barlow Moor\*, Moss Side Powerhouse, Gorton and Brooklands were ranked in the top three for three different satisfaction measures each.
- Both Fallowfield\* and Arcadia\* ranked in the bottom three for 6 out of 10 key measures, such as customer care, choice of books and overall satisfaction.
- Of the libraries with statistically viable results, New Moston was ranked in the bottom three libraries most often (5 measures), followed by Hulme High Street (3 measures).

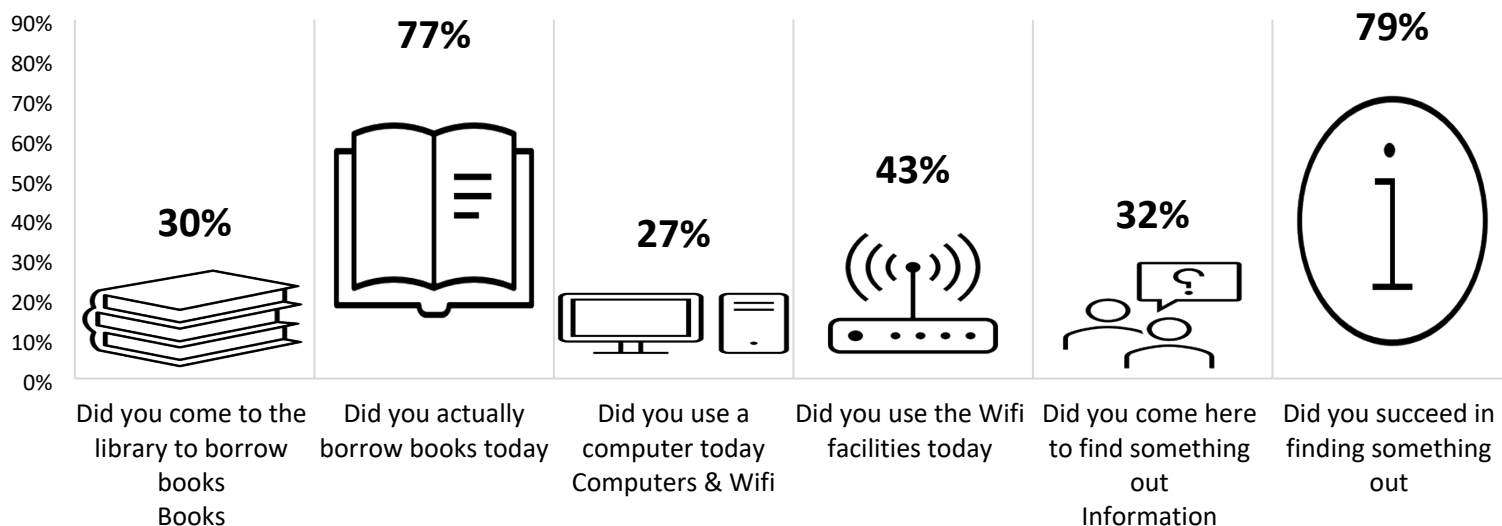
Library	Count of Top 3	Top Three In:
Miles Platting*	7	Overall, Internal, Customer Care, Books; Condition, Computers, Wi-Fi & Information
Barlow Moor*	3	Overall, Customer Care & Computers
MS Powerhouse	3	Overall, Internal & Information
Gorton	3	External, Internal & Computers
Brooklands	3	External, Wi-Fi & Information
Beswick*	2	Opening Hours & Books: Condition
Northenden	2	Customer Care & Books: Condition
Longsight	2	Books: Choice & Wi-Fi
Avenue	2	Opening Hours & Books: Choice
Abraham Moss*	1	Books: Choice
Newton Heath*	1	Opening Hours
Didsbury	1	External

Library	Count of Bottom 3	Bottom Three In:
Fallowfield*	6	Overall, Customer Care, Books: Choice, Books: Condition, Computers & Information
Arcadia*	6	Overall, Internal, Customer Care, Books: Choice, Books: Condition & Wi-Fi
New Moston	5	Opening Hours, External, Internal, Books: Condition & Information
Hulme High St	3	Customer Care, Computers & Information
Northenden	2	Opening Hours & External
Abraham Moss*	2	Overall & External
Chorlton	2	Internal & Wi-Fi
Central Library	2	Computers & Wi-Fi
Miles Platting*	1	Opening Hours
Withington*	1	Books: Choice

## Library Usage

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- 32% of customers wanted to find something out during their visit and of those respondents, 79% succeeded. Beswick\* Library saw the biggest increase from 2020 (+17%), followed by Barlow Moor\* (+10%) which scored 95% and 100% respectively.
- 30% of customers visited the library to borrow books comparable to 37% in 2020. Of the 30% of customers that intended to borrow a book, 77% did so. Respondents were most likely to intend to borrow a book from Burnage (65%) and least likely from Central Library (21%).
- 27% of visitors used a computer, a 10% decrease from 2020. Half of users from Miles Platting\* and Barlow Moor\* used a computer. Respondents were least likely to use a computer in Fallowfield\* and Didsbury; both 19%.
- 43% of respondents used the Wi-Fi, a 36 % decrease from 2020. The library with the least Wi-Fi usage was Miles Platting\* (16%). The highest rate of Wi-Fi use was from users of Arcadia\* library with 57%.



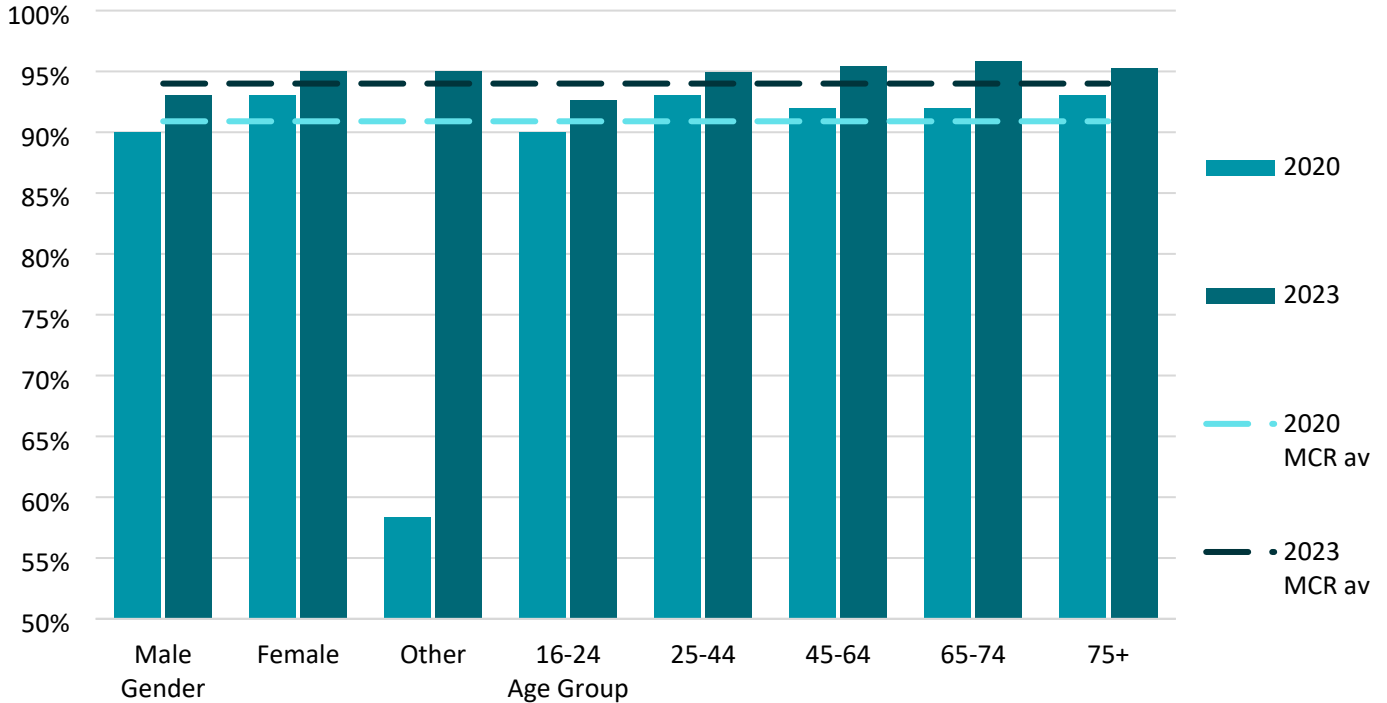
## About our customers

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- The most likely way for respondents to travel to the library was on public transport (45%) which is an exact reflection of the proportion of 2020 respondents. 16 % of customers travelled to the library using private transport such as cars or motorbikes – this is a 4% decline since 2020. 2023 saw an incline in respondents travelling to the libraries on foot, rising from 30% to 34%.
- A section focusing on loneliness and isolation was introduced in 2020. 38% percent of respondents said they felt lonely either some of the time or often, and 73% of those respondents said visiting the library helped to reduce these feelings of loneliness.
- The gender split for the weighted Manchester response was 59% female and 40% male; in 2020 this was 56% female and 43% male. The response rate for this question was 90%, which was 1% higher than the 2020 response rate. Overall satisfaction levels showed that female customers were 95% satisfied and male customers 93% satisfied.

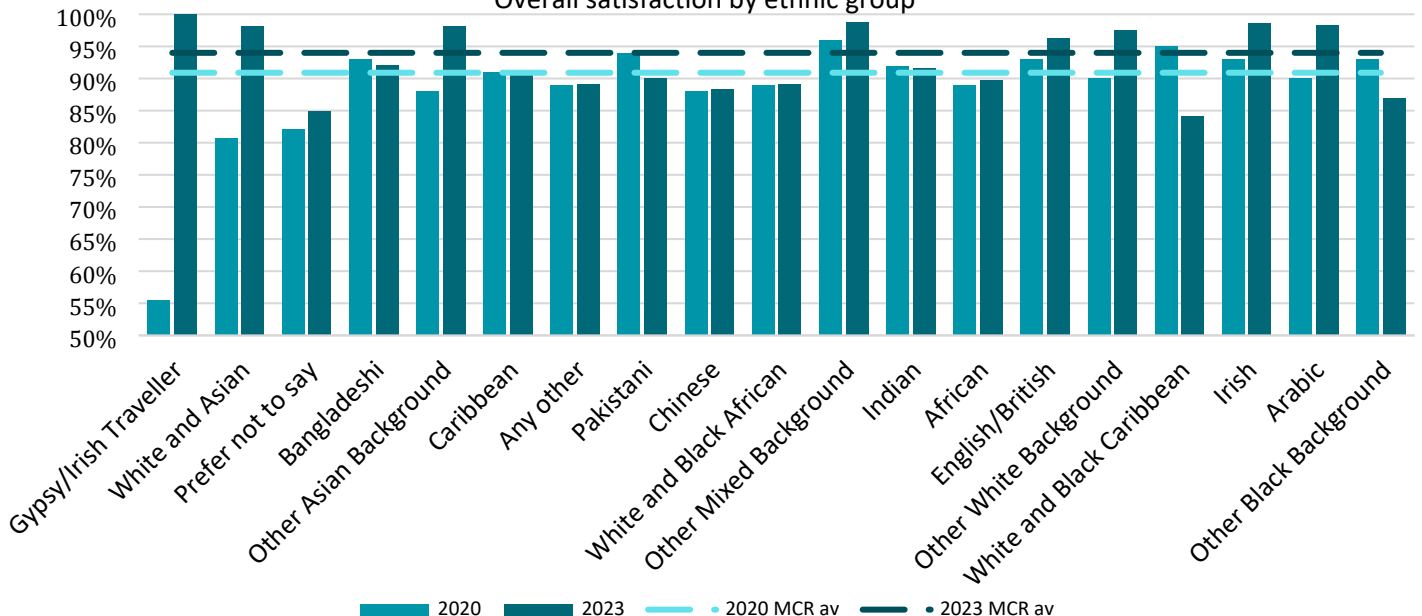
- Age: 18% of the customers who took part in the survey were under 25. The age group with the highest number of respondents was 35 to 44, making up 18% of respondents who provided their age. 7% were 75 and over: the oldest of whom were aged 97. The age group with lowest proportions of satisfied customers were the under 25s at 93%, whereas the 65-74 cohort had the highest numbers of satisfied respondents (96%).

Overall satisfaction by gender and age

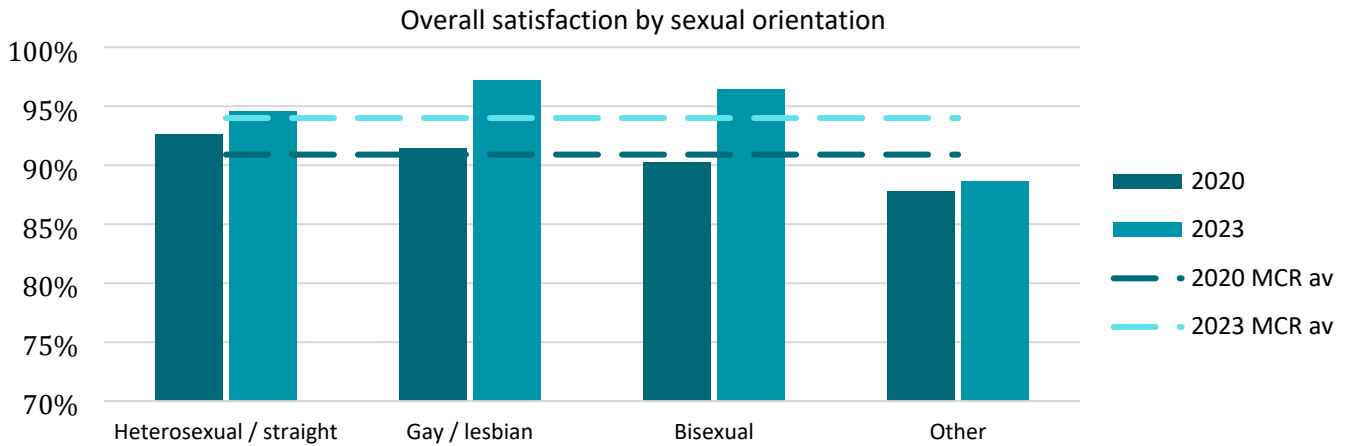


- With regards ethnic groups, 66% of those surveyed identified as being White (4% higher than the previous survey), 11% Asian, 12% Black, 4% Mixed and 3% Other. The response rate for this question was 91% which is a 6% increase since 2020. The group with the highest level of overall satisfaction was Gypsy or Irish Traveller (100%) which increased 44% since 2020, followed by Other Mixed Background (99%). Mixed ethnicities White and Black Caribbean were the ethnic group with the lowest levels of satisfaction (84%). The size of the response captured for these ethnic groups is very small so it should be noted that this may not be a true reflection of satisfaction levels amongst these groups.

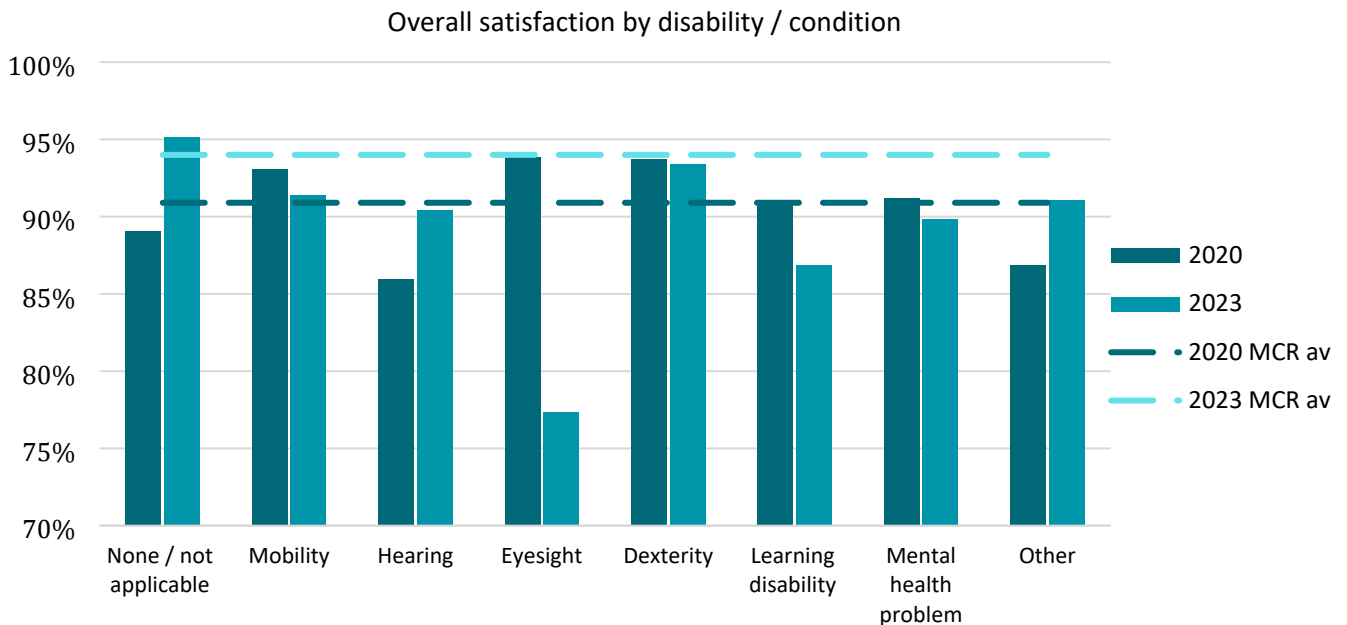
Overall satisfaction by ethnic group



- In terms of sexual orientation, 89% of respondents identified as being heterosexual, 5% as gay/lesbian, 4% bisexual and 2% other. The response rate to this question was 88% therefore the results may not be fully representative of our customer cohort, however this is a 10% increase in response rate since the previous survey. Customers who cited their sexuality as gay/lesbian had the highest level of satisfaction overall (97%) whilst customers who cited their sexuality as other had the lowest overall satisfaction (87%). This is closely aligned to 2020.



- Customers taking part in the PLUS survey were asked if they had a disability/condition. 28% of respondents considered themselves to have at least one. 8% of respondents had mobility difficulties, 5% had hearing difficulties, 3% had a dexterity disability, 5% learning disability, 2% had eyesight difficulties and 12% said they had mental health problems. Overall, customers who cited no disabilities were more likely to be satisfied than those who did. The lowest satisfaction rate was from those who noted having disabilities related to their eyesight (77% which is 17% lower than 2020). The response rate for this question was 81%.



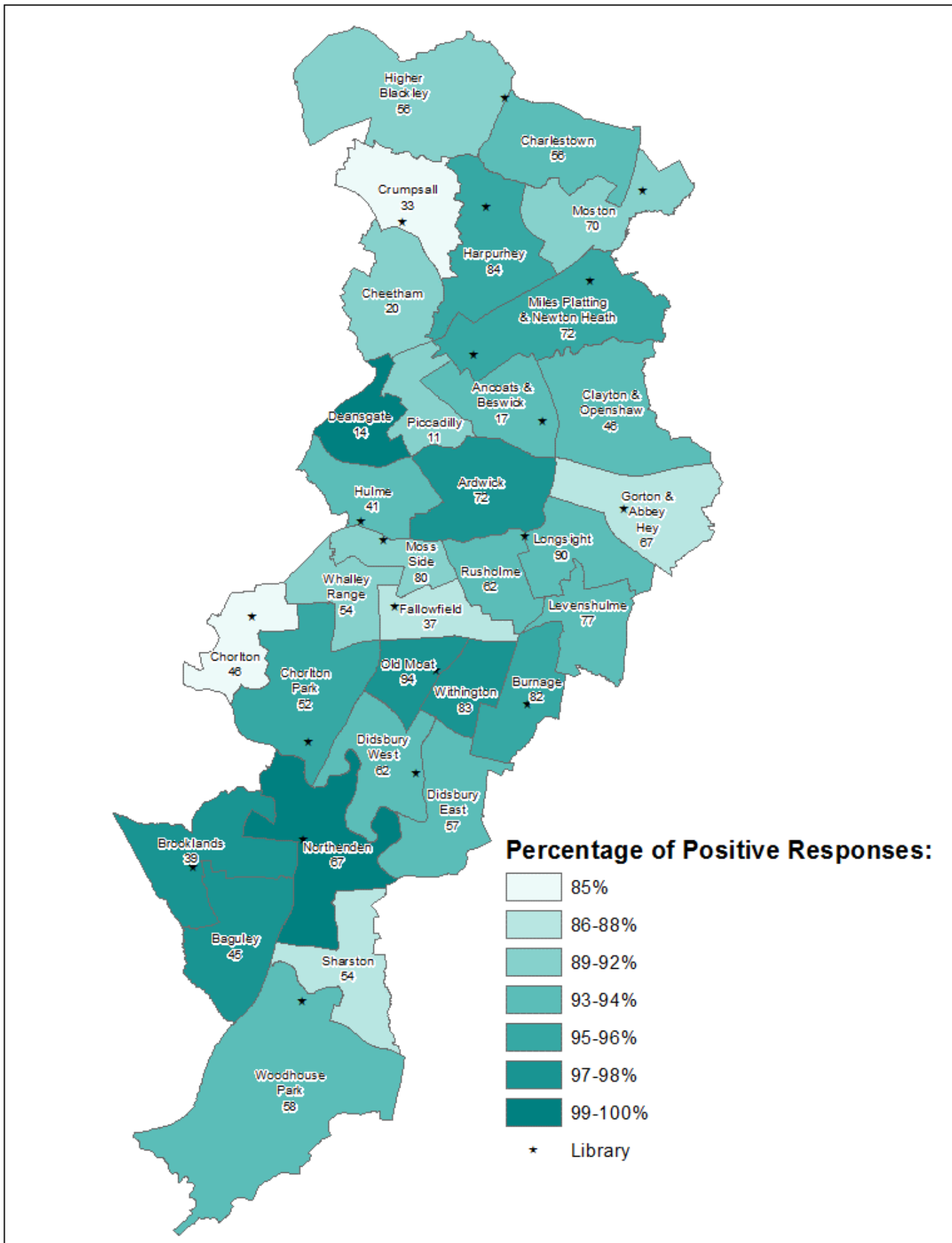
- 38% of respondents cited their faith as Christian, 15% Muslim, and 40% declared they did not have a religion. The response rate to this question was 90% (a 16% increase to the response rate in 2020). Customers who cited their religion as Buddhist were the most satisfied at 100% (although there were just 35 respondents identifying with this demographic). Those who preferred not to provide a response about religion were least satisfied at 88%. It must be noted the cohort size for different religious groups captured in this survey were small so may not show a true reflection of satisfaction levels amongst this group.

- 47% of customers surveyed in Manchester were economically active (working part-time, full-time, self-employed), in comparison to 44% in 2020. Of the customers in Manchester who were economically inactive, 14% were students, which was 8% less than 2020, 10% unemployed, 2% long-term sick or disabled, 23% were retired and 2% were looking after the home or family. Of the customers who are economically active, 95% were satisfied with their local library; those who are retired 96% and those who are unemployed 93%. The response rate for this question was 89% (a 7% increase since 2020).
- 49% of respondents have been using the library for over three years and 38% have been using the library for over a year, while 13% were making their first visit, which shows new customers are being attracted as well as retaining a high number of our existing customer base. Of those making their first visit, 96% were satisfied with the library they visited compared to those who had been using the library for three years or more at 92%.
- Customers were also asked if using the library had helped them in aspects of their personal lives. 57% responded saying it had helped them in study/learning, 26% to get online, 44% meeting people, 46% in feeling better about themselves, 11% for job seeking, 38% said it helped them with their health and wellbeing, 11% for their job and 3% for managing finances. Out of all responses received, 89% indicated that using a library has helped them in one or more aspects of their lives.
- A new element of the survey in 2023 questioned digital inclusion. 14% of respondents indicated that they did not have access to the internet at home. Of the 14%, almost half (47%) suggested this was due to the expense of Wi-Fi and 25% said they had no need for it. 21% of respondents stated they didn't have the equipment necessary for Wi-Fi use and a further 13% said they didn't have the skills to use it. 5% of customers said they didn't feel safe to use the internet at home.
- Finally, customers were given the opportunity to offer a closing comment or library suggestion for improvement. 1,538 respondents chose to do so, and the comments are currently being analysed.

# Manchester Adults PLUS 2023

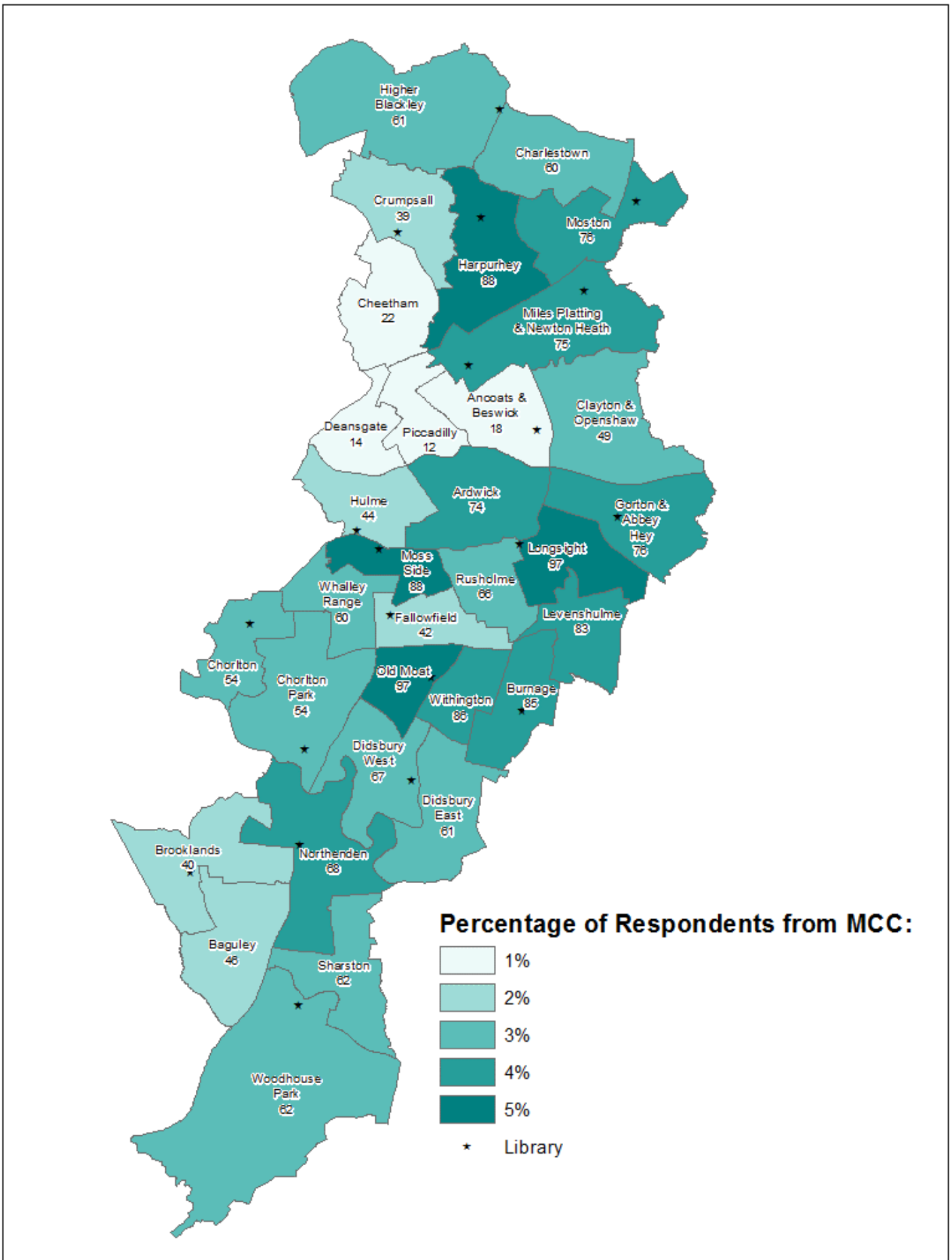
Overall, how good is this library?

Count of positive responses and percentage by respondents' home postcode.



# Manchester Adults PLUS 2023

## Residence of Manchester Respondents by Ward (1,926)



# Case Study: Potting Herbs with Gale

**Business Name:** Potting Herbs with Gale

From Potential Entrepreneur to Community Interest Group.

You tube video: [Generator: A Community in Focus - Gale Whitby \(2024\)](#)

## Introduction

Potting Herbs with Gale began as a grassroots community project with a simple but powerful mission: to help people grow their own herbs and learn how natural, fresh produce can improve health, wellbeing, and daily living. Built on the principles of connection, nature, and wellbeing, the project has evolved into a multidimensional community offer that supports residents both through hands-on horticulture and increasingly through digital inclusion.

Since 2022, the project has benefited from ongoing support from the Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), the Build a Business programme, and The Generator. This support and the dedicated assistance from staff such as Michael and Joe has helped Potting Herbs with Gale move from a small community idea to a thriving, impactful initiative.

## Early Business Activity at The Generator

When first joining The Generator as a potential Entrepreneur, Potting Herbs with Gale operated as a nature-based community wellbeing project. The core aim was to teach residents how to grow and use herbs to support a healthier lifestyle physically, mentally, and emotionally.

The project offered free, practical workshops covering:

- The health benefits of eating fresh herbs.
- Basic herbal medicine and simple home remedies.
- Using herbs for natural household purposes.
- Growing techniques for beginners.
- The wellbeing benefits of gardening and nature connection.

At its heart, Potting Herbs with Gale followed the *Five Ways to Health and Wellbeing*:

1. **Connect** – Bringing together people with shared interests.

2. **Be Active** – Potting, planting, and working outdoors to support physical and mental health.
3. **Take Notice** – Encouraging participants to enjoy the calming effects of nature.
4. **Learn** – Teaching the various benefits and uses of herbs.
5. **Give** – Creating opportunities for participants to share ideas and support each other.

## Support from The Generator / Build a business / BIPC

“I have been working with Michael Waistell since Build a Business was launched and continued receiving support from the BIPC and The Generator since 2022.”

The Generator has played a significant role in the growth of Potting Herbs with Gale by offering:

- A welcoming and reliable workspace
- Opportunities to network with other business-minded individuals
- Guidance with completing CIC applications where a became an established CIC
- Free access to workspaces suitable for a community-led, non-profit initiative
- Utilising free business workshops through Generator, Build a Business and BIPC
- Free business training workshops which have helped me to further develop my skills and knowledge in marketing my business and myself.
- I have done training on their databases COBRA and Grant finder which I find particularly useful.

Joe Drury from Trafford BIPC and Michael Waistell from the generator provided particularly valuable help when the CIC application process first opened. Their support ensured clarity, confidence, and a smooth transition into community-interest status.

As a business that does not generate income at present, having free access to The Generator has removed financial barriers, offering a safe, supportive, and productive environment.

## New Services and Innovation

### Expansion Beyond Gardening

What began as a simple gardening project in Debdale Park soon revealed a deeper need within the community. Many participants struggled with digital skills an increasingly essential area as more services and everyday tasks move online.

Recognising this unmet need, Potting Herbs with Gale expanded into digital inclusion.

## Partnership with Manchester City Council's Digital Inclusion Team

Through connections facilitated by The Generator and Manchester Work & Skills, Gale was introduced to Manchester City Council's Digital Inclusion Team. Their support included:

- A small grant to deliver digital activities.
- Practical guidance from digital inclusion experts.
- Links to wider community partners.

This enabled digital skills training to become a core new offer. Potting Herbs with Gail now became digital.

## Joining the Good Things Foundation

Gale became part of the Good Things Foundation a national charity supporting digital learning which provided access to:

- **Learn My Way**, a free online learning platform for beginners.
- Training resources and community networks.

## Weekly Digital Skills Sessions at Gorton Library

With support from Gorton Library and neighbourhood services, weekly Wednesday morning digital skills sessions were launched. These sessions offer:

- A friendly, pressure-free environment
- One-to-one support for absolute beginners
- Self-paced learning using Learn My Way
- Access to essential equipment

Community Computers supplied four laptops, and Causeway donated a portable MiFi unit, ensuring all learners have digital access.

These sessions have empowered individuals to:

- Learn to use a mouse and keyboard.
- Navigate the internet.
- Manage emails.
- Stay safe online.
- Communicate with friends and family digitally.

One participant previously relying solely on a landline now uses WhatsApp confidently and has even set up a family group.

This transformation demonstrates the far-reaching impact of the new digital inclusion services.

## **New Markets**

Potting Herbs with Gale has successfully expanded into a new service area: **digital literacy and digital inclusion**. While the original focus was community gardening, the project now delivers structured digital skills support accessible to all.

This new market includes:

- Digital confidence-building activities
- Basic computer skills training
- Online service access support
- Partnerships with libraries, charities, and Manchester City Council

Although delivery remains within Greater Manchester, this diversification marks a significant shift in both service direction and community reach.

## **Additional Activities**

Gale has also launched:

### **Herbal Tea Party at Gorton Library**

A social, wellbeing-focused event where participants enjoy a range of herbal teas while learning about their benefits.

### **Culture Nature Programme (March 2025)**

Gale delivered a series of wellbeing and nature-based sessions across multiple libraries as part of this programme.

Gale has also been connected with Tameside Libraries due to her proximity to the area and existing local community links.

## Conclusion

Potting Herbs with Gale has grown from a simple gardening initiative to a multifaceted community support project that strengthens wellbeing, grows confidence, and bridges the digital divide. With the help of The Generator, the BIPC, Manchester Libraries and Manchester City Council's Digital Inclusion Team, the project continues to expand its reach and deepen its impact.