

## 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>