



Woolwick Infant and Nursery School

# Hertfordshire Libraries Annual Report 2022-23



# Contents

Foreword – Councillor Caroline Clapper	3
Introduction – Michele Murphy	4
Our strategy, vision, and values	5
Performance highlights	6
My Place to Connect	7
Discover information and learning	8
Improve health and wellbeing	9
Experience reading, art, and culture	10
Explore innovative technology	11
Improving library spaces	12
Our staff and volunteers	13
Partners	14



Children at Watford Library sharing books during Summer Reading Challenge 2022



Fiction area at refurbished Radlett Library

# Foreword - Councillor Caroline Clapper

## Executive Member for Education, Libraries & Lifelong Learning



Our libraries are uniquely placed at the heart of communities across Hertfordshire and play an important role in the delivery of the council's strategic priorities. Libraries contribute to health & wellbeing, support educational attainment & lifelong learning, provide trusted sources of information, and enable access to reading, arts and culture on the high street.

The examples in this Annual Report demonstrate how libraries are continually adapting and developing to meet the changing needs of communities whilst continuing to deliver excellent services for all.

# Introduction – Michele Murphy

## Head of Libraries

Every year our teams deliver a wide range of services and initiatives which vary from local projects to countywide and national programmes. This Annual Report demonstrates the breadth of the work that is done by our libraries and highlights achievements in the first year of our new ten-year strategy “Inspiring Libraries: My Place 2022-2032”.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of library staff and volunteers, coupled with the support of key partners and stakeholders. I would like to thank everyone in our teams for the role they play in ensuring that we are a leading library service.



# Our strategy, vision, and values

Our annual report outlines progress against ambitions for our service outlined in our ten-year strategy “Inspiring Libraries: My Place” and the wider organisational priorities enshrined in the council’s Corporate Plan 2022-25. Our staff and volunteers work together with other council services, partner organisations, community groups, and members of the public to deliver a service that exemplifies the RISE values.



**Enriching the lives of individuals and communities by fostering knowledge, creativity, imagination and understanding.**



A cleaner and greener environment

Healthy and fulfilling lives for our residents

Sustainable, responsible growth in our county

Excellent council services for all

# Performance highlights



**5,693,123**  
Issues



**5,283,602**  
Visits



**1.2 million**  
Picture Book loans

**54,545**  
New members



**125,653**  
Borrowers



**Over 7,000**  
Events and activities



**16,146**  
Children took part in Summer Reading Challenge



**230,172**  
Reservations

# My Place to Connect

Libraries organised a wide range of **social groups** to enable people of all ages to connect with others and reduce loneliness. Groups are tailored to meet the needs within local communities, leading attendees to form friendships and feel at home in the library space.



Members of Welwyn Garden City Tuesday Allsorts group share their show and tell items



A child on a school visit holding a giant My First library card

**My Firsts** was launched to encourage 0 - 5 year olds to join the library with attractive materials designed with local emerging artists. My First Library Card features Tala the storyteller, and this, along with a variety of certificates, supports and celebrates milestones in the development of young children at the start of their reading journey.



Libraries collaborated with partners to offer support and a warm welcome to refugees. Hertfordshire Libraries supported a summer camp for children from Afghan Refugee families, gifting books and delivering stimulating creative activities for the young people.



Paper kites created at the summer camp for children from Afghan Refugee families

# Discover information and learning

**Cosmic Curiosity**, an innovative project in partnership with the University of Hertfordshire, delivered Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) sessions for children. Families attended a series of activities in libraries, we created booklists to spark imagination, and also staged events for an adult audience. We were delighted that this project was chosen to receive a national Family Learning Award.



A promotional image designed for the Cosmic Curiosity project



Five full day **cyber crime awareness** events were held in libraries in partnership with Hertfordshire Police and Trading Standards. These sessions featured stalls from a variety of organisations and expert talks, enabling citizens to protect themselves from the latest online, phone, email and text scams and giving them the opportunity to receive specific advice from a variety of partners.



A promotional poster for the cyber crime awareness campaign

Libraries are a partner in the delivery of the national **Multiply** Project in Hertfordshire, working with Step2Skills to improve the numeracy skills and confidence of adults.





# Improve health and wellbeing

Libraries were a key part of the county council's **Warm Spaces initiative** in response to the cost of living pressures. Libraries extended the number of drop-in groups and refreshments available during the winter period.

Hatfield Library has supported those in greatest need in the local community by partnering with a charity, Resolve, and a local café to provide vouchers for over 5,000 free meals, funded through the **Household Support Fund**.



A promotional image for Warm Spaces

**Slipper Swaps** were delivered in 11 libraries, in partnership with Adult Care Services, gifting almost 500 pairs of slippers. Alongside a focus on Falls Prevention with support from Occupational Therapists, these events signposted residents to cost of living support available from a variety of organisations.

Libraries delivered the literacy element of the **Fit, Fed and Read** initiative which ran during four school holidays. The scheme delivers a programme of physical activity, fun approaches to literacy and a nutritious meal. The project will feature in a regional impact study demonstrating the social value of libraries.



Young people enjoying Fit, Fed and Read



Photo from Royston Slipper Swap

# Experience reading, art and culture

**Joseph Coelho the Waterstones Children's Laureate** visited Stevenage Library as part of his nationwide tour of libraries and mission to join every library service in the UK. Children from a local primary school were treated to a lively story time and Joseph received his own My First Library card.



Joseph Coelho, Waterstone Children's Laureate, holding a My Firsts library card



Artwork from My Story: Artist in Residence programmes at Hitchin and North Watford libraries, on display at Oxhey Library

We celebrated the **My Story** project (funded by Arts Council England) with two festival events and a series of 5 workshops at libraries to accompany the tour of artwork produced during residencies by local artists. Further funding has been secured to develop the Artist in Residence programme for the next two years.

Our cultural programme has featured a range of live theatre and music. Highlights included folk singer, Lizzy Hardingham, performing during a **Music and Mental Health** event, dedicated theatre performances for families living with autism, and two performances of **Nothing on Earth**, a musical exploration of Hertfordshire heroines by Pursued By A Bear.



Lizzy Hardingham performing at Music and Mental Health event

# Explore innovative technology

**CreatorSpaces** were introduced to Welwyn Garden City and Hitchin libraries. Specialist equipment is available at both locations, enabling the community to benefit from activities such as 3D printing, digital cutting, digital sewing machines, green screen filming technology and virtual reality.



Digital cutter in action at Welwyn Garden City

In response to staff feedback and consultation, we expanded our offer of digital and STEM technologies with additional **CreatorSpace Out of the Box** resources. These collections enable pop up activities showcasing portable technology and a variety of exciting resources for people of all ages.



A family enjoy a virtual reality experience at Welwyn Garden City CreatorSpace launch

We now have 6 dedicated CreatorSpaces in libraries, extending access to innovative and creative technology for all ages.



A Hitchin resident has fun with the green screen in the library's new CreatorSpace

# Improving library spaces

Our continuous programme to invest in our library spaces has introduced CreatorSpaces at **Welwyn Garden City** and **Hitchin**; expanded children's areas at **Hertford** and **Radlett**; delivered a new community meeting room at **Rickmansworth**; and a significant refurbishment of the public space at **Buntingford**.

Upgrades have taken place to improve **Open+** swipe card access at Croxley Green and Berkhamsted libraries. Work is underway to roll out this self-service access to additional locations.



Children's area at Hertford



CreatorSpace at Welwyn Garden City on launch day

A heat pump was installed at Hitchin Library, contributing to the council's Sustainable Hertfordshire strategy.

We have been successful in bidding for additional government funding to improve the flexibility of two areas within Watford and Hoddesdon Libraries. The projects will be delivered over a two year period through the Libraries Improvement Fund.

# Our staff and volunteers

The inaugural **Inspiring Libraries Awards** were held in 2022 to recognise and celebrate the dedication and commitment of library staff and volunteers across the service. Executive Member Cllr Terry Douris presented the recipients of the six awards at a ceremony at St Albans Library.



Winners at the inaugural Staff Awards



My Voice volunteers at St Albans Open Hour evening

A successful grant application to Arts Council England has resulted in the **My Voice** project. Young people are now sitting on a Youth Advisory Board to ensure youth voice is embedded in all areas of our service. Our staff have benefited from training delivered by partners in this project - the OLLIE Foundation and DS Achieve – covering a range of topics including suicide prevention, goalsetting and Down Syndrome awareness.

Thank you to our volunteers of all ages who have supported the library service this year:

**8,321**  
Volunteers



**51,189**  
Volunteer  
hours

# Partners





**Hertfordshire**

Creating a cleaner, greener,  
healthier Hertfordshire