

South Gloucestershire Library Service Annual Report 2015-2016

This report summarises the work of South Gloucestershire Libraries in 2015/16, it highlights the impact we have had on communities and individuals.

Reading and literacy

Vital statistic 1.1 million books issued

Downend Library 69,774 books issued

Time4Reading

This year the service has been working across South Gloucestershire on the Time4Reading project involving schools (primary and secondary) and the wider community. Schools have developed an award scheme to reward schools who achieve certain criteria, see www.southglos.gov.uk/time4reading

Children reading

The work with children and the encouragement of children to read makes South Gloucestershire one of the leading authorities – more children took part in the Summer Reading Challenge per capita than any other library in the South West. The service does work with all ages from pre-school children to teenagers, 44% of books issued are children's books. The Concorde book Award is becoming a highly prestigious award and this year's ceremony was an exciting affair.

Parents said of the Summer Reading Challenge: 'A great idea to encourage us to come into the library, read more and it's all free! Thank you Children said "It made reading fun and I got lots of stickers"'



Adult reading

To mark the Rugby World Cup libraries supported the regional reading passport, this opened doors to working with Bristol Sport through a longer term relationship both in schools and libraries.

The high profile events and activities are complimented by work within all the communities in engaging people with reading both within the library and in community settings.

In June the LibrariesWest consortium expanded to include Dorset and Poole, providing users with a range of 2 million books to choose from.

Information service

Vital statistic 140,000 enquiries

Downend Library 14,196 enquiries

Libraries provide access to information, they are often the first place people will go to for help and staff are able to either provide the answer or refer to another agency or resource. For details of the information service see <http://bit.ly/1rCICEJ>. An older single lady needed repairs to her roof and was very worried about being exploited. Library staff were able to refer her to a reliable approved list of contractors, whom she could trust.

Digital literacy

Vital statistic 137,000 hours of usage of the computers **Downend Library** 11,240 hours of usage

Digital inclusion is a priority both at local and national level and the service working with Community Learning has trained staff and volunteers to deliver a consistent offer to people wanting support with IT. With the increasing channel shift in all organisations access to IT and staff to support is becoming critical for the success of the digital inclusion plans.



The service was successful in receiving a grant to promote online access and worked with the other community groups in South Gloucestershire to promote access to IT.

Job seekers have commented that they really appreciate the help given them by staff, showing them how to update their records and access job applications digitally on the Universal Jobs Match site. One lady was finding the process particularly challenging and so was delighted when she was called for interview and subsequently appointed to a position in the housekeeping department at Bristol University. We regularly show people how to access the Council Website so that they can view planning applications and request new recycling boxes and bags.

Culture and creativity

Vital statistic 9,600 adults and 65,000 children attended events in libraries

Downend Library 1,344 adults and 4,921 children attended events

Libraries enrich the lives of individual and communities through the provision of events, activities and exhibitions helping people gain a sense of place and take pride in their neighbourhoods and communities. The Discover Festival is a major part of our promotion, festival highlights at Downend Library included Discover Downend Treasure Walk; a talk on the WW1 VAD Hospital; a presentation on the Bristol Soup Run; musical entertainment by the Westerly Show band and a singing workshop. The service also supports national weeks to raise the profile of specific issues such as British Science Week, World Mental Health Day and World Book Night.

Health and wellbeing

Vital statistic 4,000 Books on Prescription titles borrowed

Downend Library 217 borrowed

Reading is healthy in its own right but libraries have continued to develop a series of books for specific conditions under the Reading Well Books on Prescription project – this year the dementia collection was launched which included stock for carers, and people experiencing dementia. In addition staff were trained to become health champions in each library. This complements the dementia and mental health arts project and memory cafes hosted in libraries. One bereaved lady said: 'After my husband died I felt very lost. The library staff were very understanding and encouraged me to join library based and community groups. Obviously it impossible to replace your partner. However the suggestions and friendliness of professional library staff have helped me manage my grief without consulting a doctor.'



Learning

Vital statistic 16,667 hours of formal learning

Downend Library 2,280 hours

Libraries promote lifelong learning, self-improvement and social mobility and play an important role supporting the educational curriculum with reading for enjoyment. They provide both formal learning programmes working closely with Community Learning and local colleges and informal learning opportunities with people developing their own skills and knowledge through use of IT and books. The service works closely with UWE where users can use their library card to access high level stock. The library workforce provides users with essential support to get the most from available learning opportunities.

They also support the economic growth of the area through providing volunteer opportunities and providing a touch down base for local workers. One gentleman regularly uses this (and other libraries) as a temporary office using the Wi-Fi and taking mobile phone calls. This means he has no office overheads.

A tutor for excluded children commented that the positive attitude of staff and atmosphere in the library made it a relaxed and conducive place to learn. An older gentleman was struggling with his tablet, but after help from staff, he was able to use it with confidence.

Community

Vital statistic 917,743 visits

Downend Library 63,598 visits

Libraries are valued safe and neutral spaces where people of all ages are welcomed and participate in a range of activities. The stories behind the visits are powerful testimonies to the value of libraries. Quite often older, more isolated customers will say that their visits and the opportunity to engage with staff and other users had given them a reason to leave the house. Mrs W had moved to sheltered accommodation, but was finding it difficult to make contact with others. We suggested she come along to our weekly coffee morning and as result she had soon established a new circle of friends.

Being based in most main communities enables the service to host the delivery of other services, we work in partnership with Community Learning, Public Health, DWP, and various voluntary sector groups enabling to work with local communities. At Downend Library we work closely with Downend and Bromley Heath Parish Council; South Gloucestershire and Stroud College; Downend Clinic; Frenchay Museum; Downend Voice and other local publications; local schools; Sporting Memories Network; Downend Folk House.

In addition libraries can be hired by community groups to ensure use of the building is maximised – users of Downend Library include local wind and swing bands; the National Childbirth Trust and Neighbourhood Watch.