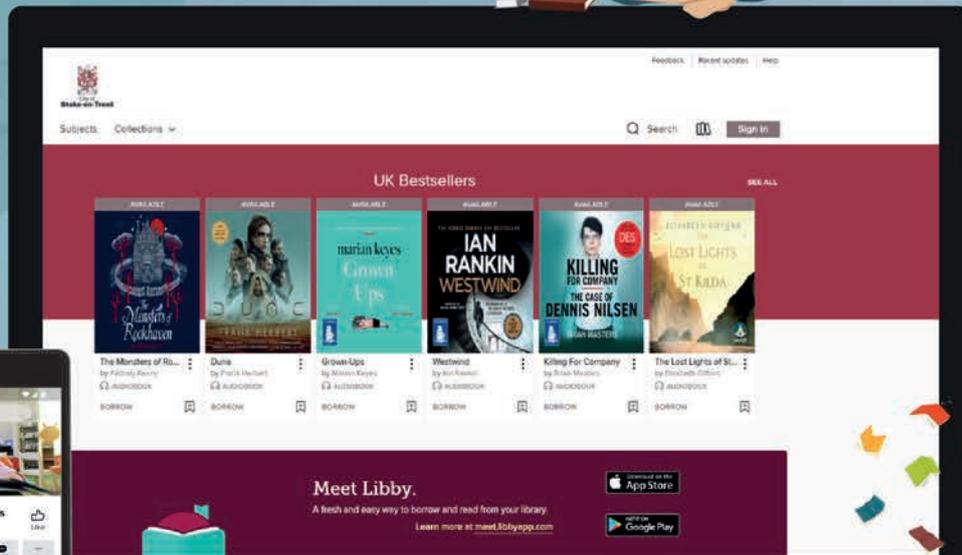




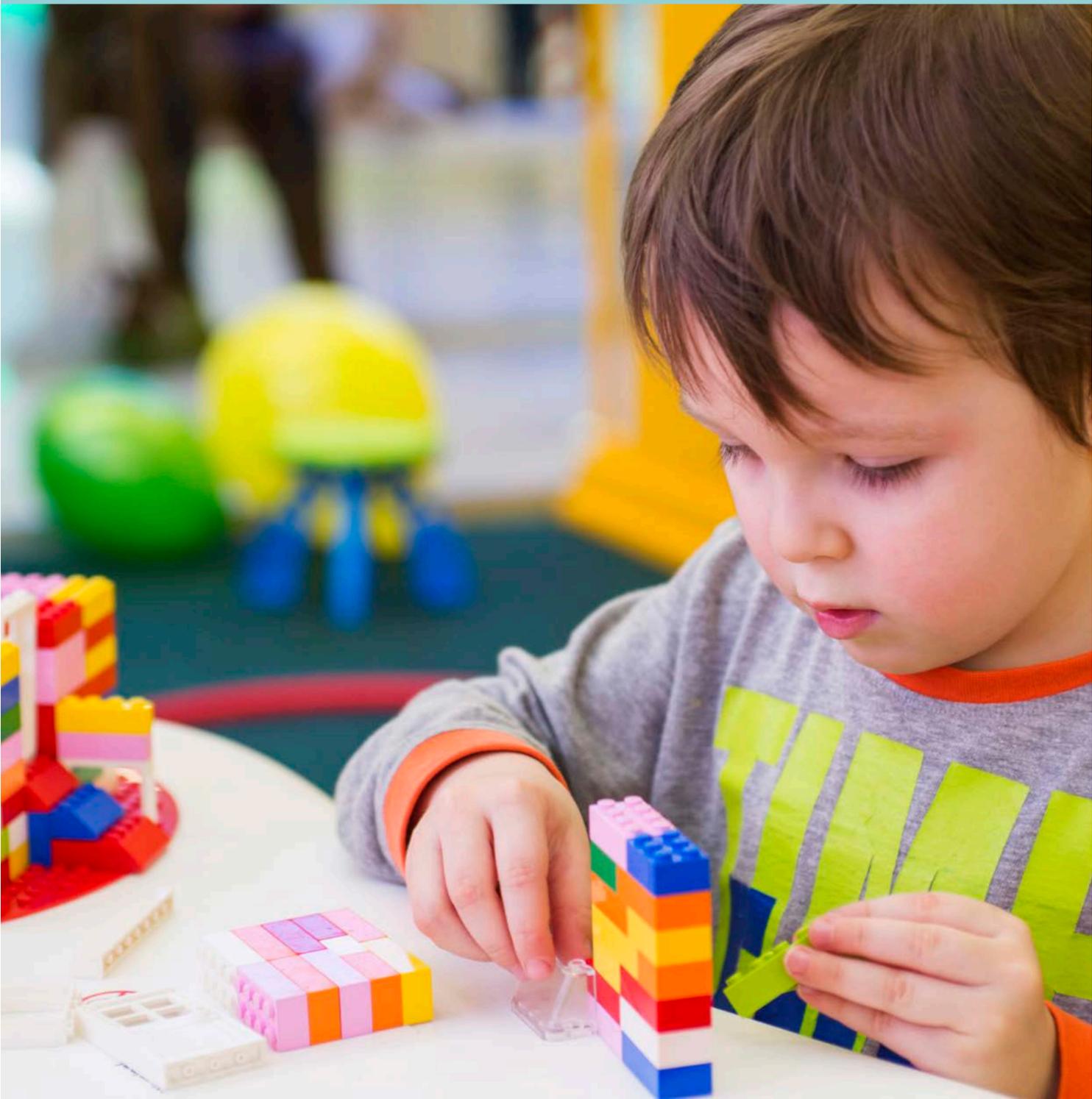
City of  
**Stoke-on-Trent**



# Stoke-on-Trent City Council **Library Strategy** **2022-2025**

## PURPOSE

This strategy provides a vision and statement of intent for the transformation of Stoke-on-Trent City Council's library services. It recognises that the role of libraries is evolving alongside the circumstances and expectations of the communities who use them.



## TIMESCALE

This strategy describes our future library service and provides a roadmap to 2025, but important changes are already underway. Our City Central and Tunstall libraries will move to exciting new locations in 2022 and we will seek funding to modernise our other libraries.

## EVIDENCE BASE

To prepare this strategy we have:

- Researched the national and local context for library services
- Developed a baseline picture of activity and usage across our current services and facilities
- Consulted with colleagues and services across the city council
- Consulted carefully with the people who work in and use our library services and appropriate external partners

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The Covid-19 pandemic meant that our libraries were closed for a long period in 2020 whilst our digital services increased in popularity. We re-opened all six libraries in 2021, once again welcoming residents with visitor numbers returning to pre-pandemic levels and digital lending continuing to increase.

Our library services are about much more than our buildings, with an extensive lending of digital items and online classes and events for a range of audiences.

Our six libraries are currently delivered via a range of hours and staff based on the demands of the communities they are placed within. Our libraries offer open access, IT access and support, job/work clubs, activities for children and adults, a library at home service, early years and school activities to name a few. We also support a community library at Trentham Community Learning Centre, as well as supporting other community focused initiatives throughout the city.



we have

# 6 Libraries

Hanley (City Central), Stoke, Tunstall, Longton, Meir and Bentilee



We have a dedicated library team assisted by volunteers giving up their time to support their local community

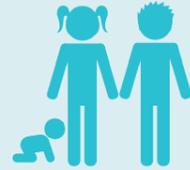
Around

## 450,000

visitors to our libraries in each year pre-covid

Around

## 4,000



children participating in events run by library staff in libraries and other places each year



## 194,658

book stock, with an average of

## 1,435

 borrowed every day

## and 51,000

items lent digitally in 2020/21



## 563

digital events and classes during 2019/20

## 137

computers available to local residents to enable them to access the internet



## 7,246

click-and-collect visits from local residents between July 2020 and March 2021



## 47

events run by local community groups in libraries in 2021

## THE CHANGING CONTEXT FOR LIBRARY SERVICES

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local councils in England have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.

Libraries are highly valued by communities, not only providing access to books and digital access but also bringing people together and providing a range of other support. The way people use libraries and their expectations are changing, as well as major global changes in the way people acquire knowledge and consume media.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also had a profound impact on the way people live their lives, with much more reliance on technology and disruption to work, learning and well-being.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council is ambitious for the future of our city. We will ensure that children and young people have the best possible start in life. We are focused on supporting and growing our local economy, leading on regeneration, investing in diversification of the housing market and creating the conditions for business to grow and thrive. Our work and investment will drive employment growth, push wages up and increase prosperity for our residents and communities. Library services have an important role to play in this process.

The Council must focus resources on helping the city to recover and thrive. We are transforming and modernising all our services to achieve this. Transformation in libraries must work in harmony with our wider efforts to expand and improve digital services, make effective use of assets and space within localities and connect and engage with our communities.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR OUR LIBRARY SERVICES?

The purpose of Stoke-on-Trent's libraries has always been to provide trusted sources of knowledge and learning for citizens. This remains fundamentally important and will not change. What is changing is how our residents want to acquire this knowledge and learning, and our library services must adapt accordingly, whilst still supporting reading and also reading for pleasure at the heart of what we do. Building on the work that has already been done by library staff, our services will continue to provide trusted access points – physical and digital – to information, support, community and learning. Our services and buildings will also play a broader role within their localities, acting as platforms to tackle multiple social and economic problems head-on within our communities.

This may mean some changes to how we use the space within our libraries and the services they offer in ways that are appropriate to each locality. It will also mean supporting and enabling the people who work in our libraries to work differently and provide broader advice, information and guidance to residents where appropriate.



## OUR VISION FOR 2025

Stoke-on-Trent City Council's library services are trusted sources of knowledge and learning that provide physical and digital points of connection for local communities. With reading and literacy at their heart, they offer access to information, both physically and digitally, for all who want it and in ways that respond directly to the needs of the most vulnerable in each locality.

# STRATEGIC AIMS

With the city council's "Stronger Together" outcomes and the Universal Library Offers from Libraries Connected as our guide, the purpose of Stoke-on-Trent's libraries is to provide **knowledge, learning, connection and community**.



## Knowledge and Learning

We will:

- Provide learning opportunities, trusted information and resources to local communities
- Promote literacy and learning for children and families in particular
- Provide an appropriate environment for reading and study
- Help to improve digital skills and inclusion
- Provide people with volunteering and training opportunities within their community



## Connection and Community

We will:

- Help library users to find relevant information, advice and guidance and connect people digitally with key services and support
- Amplify and celebrate our civic pride, local arts and cultural heritage
- Put libraries at the heart of communities, creating space for involvement, creativity and locally-led use
- Provide a place to help grow connections and receive support for people and groups who need it

Our library services must be sustainable and help other city council services to support local people as we focus all available resources in helping Stoke-on-Trent to recover and thrive. This means:

- Finding ways to get the best out of our limited resources within each locality through a flexible and modern library offer.
- Providing supported access points to a range of Council digital services and transactions.
- Shaping our physical and digital library services to build resilience within communities and help manage demand for social care and early help for children, young people and families.
- Make effective use of our space alongside wider assets and spaces within each locality.



# KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING – WHAT WE WILL DO AND HOW

## What we will do

Provide learning opportunities, trusted information and resources to local communities

## How we will do it

- Maintain appropriate levels of physical and digital stock and ensure that they are as accessible as possible
- Ensure that the new library offer is effectively branded and communicated to users
- Link to and support national campaigns to support reading for mental health and wellbeing

## What we will do

Promote literacy and learning for children and families in particular

## How we will do it

- Build on existing strong relationships with city schools and early years settings to expand our programme of events and activities – within libraries and online
- Provide literacy aid – helping children catch up with schooling and addressing speech and language problems caused by social isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Support early years and health partners to support the BookStart programme
- Continue to support our education and community agenda by providing a library service through our little library van in the community

## What we will do

Continue to provide an appropriate environment for reading and study

## How we will do it

- Ensure that all libraries continue to offer an environment suitable for studying, prioritised for young people who may be unable to study at home

## What we will do

Help to improve digital skills and inclusion

### How we will do it

- Provide access to computers and the internet in all libraries
- Create volunteering opportunities for provision of classes and guidance to those seeking to increase their digital skills – for example friendly peer support on basic skills like video chats, exercise classes and how to play your favourite music
- Consider developing a lending library of tablet devices for people to use and consume digital media in their own homes

## What we will do

Help residents to acquire work experience and skills including within our libraries

### How we will do it

- Engaging people to get back in to work e.g. CV support – Work Clubs
- Build links with local higher and further education services and run appropriate events e.g. with a focus on STEAM - science, technology, engineering, the arts & mathematics (e.g. code clubs, lego clubs)
- Create volunteering opportunities for those who wish to work in libraries to support their local communities
- Create learning and career pathways for priority groups e.g. care leavers who wish to develop skills that will help to access paid employment



# CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY – WHAT WE WILL DO AND HOW

## What we will do

Help library users to find relevant information, advice and guidance and connect people digitally with key services and supports

### How we will do it

- Ensure that users are physically and digitally signposted to opportunities to engage with wider services, opportunities to volunteer and build connections within their communities. Involve libraries in wider city council campaigns such as recruitment of foster carers
- Ensure that library users can be supported to complete key city council service requests and transactions online such as paying housing rent accounts or applying for housing
- Continue to provide physical and digital support for residents seeking to access local and national welfare services including applying for universal credit and jobseekers allowance. This means providing supervised access to the internet and library staff or volunteers able to provide guidance and support

## What we will do

Amplify and celebrate our civic pride, local arts and cultural heritage

### How we will do it

- Work with cultural partners to provide events and exhibition space, for example cultural history stories that reflect individual localities and helping local artists to reach an audience.
- Create opportunities for residents to engage in cultural and creative activities such as art and music
- Provide adult writing challenges, classes and share work from local authors
- Involve local schools with literary events, challenges and classes
- Explore collaboration with GrowthPoint to enable the exhibition and sale of arts and crafts materials



## Library Enquiries

### What we will do

Put libraries at the heart of communities, creating space for involvement, creativity and community use

### How we will do it

- Ensure that all libraries offer high quality and versatile space for multi-purpose and community-led use. Ensure that communities are aware and make use of the resources available to them
- Build connections with existing initiatives around community involvement and low-level needs such as community lounges, the ABLE project for adults with disabilities and Reach Out, working with adults with low-level mental health needs

### What we will do

Provide a place to help grow connections and receive support for people and groups who need it

### How we will do it

- Ensure that our physical spaces are accessible, welcoming, and comfortable environments for socially isolated people and key groups such as refugees, asylum seekers
- Ensure that library staff can offer appropriate information, advice and guidance and provide space for services tailored to their needs
- Provide prioritised access to appropriate space for use by Council services and key partners to engage with key groups, for example "Reach Out" venues for engaging with adults with low-level mental health needs, peer support events for foster carers, intergenerational events for adults and children with learning disabilities, day services sessions
- Ensure that libraries form part of our corporate parenting offer, with positive activities for children within the care system and their carers

## ENABLING PRINCIPLES



### Buildings:

Modern library facilities, including two brand new locations for City Central and Tunstall libraries, are places for learning, creativity, and community. Working in harmony with other local public assets, they provide different types of spaces suitable for a variety of uses including study, community-led use and bringing people together for support.



### Digital services:

Library services are champions for digital inclusion and digital service delivery, with all residents able to access digital media easily and cheaply. A varied programme of digital events and classes is provided. Residents can access help, both online and in person, to increase their skills and access digital public services. Digital library services are experienced in homes, schools, residential care settings and community venues.



### People:

Our professional library staff, assisted by volunteers, apprentices and work-based trainees, reflect their communities and can help to connect people with wider services and support. As these changes become embedded, residents often receive help they weren't expecting or didn't know they could access through our libraries.



# SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE

We will rebrand and relaunch our physical and digital library offer in 2022. Embracing this new library offer will mean doing more of what we already do well and doing some things differently. We are developing a new approach for our library services to describe these changes in more detail. The direction of travel is summarised in the table below.



## People

### What we will continue

Our professional librarians, library staff and volunteers will continue to provide the high-quality services that they are passionate about.

### What will change

- We will not expect library staff to become experts in all areas, but we will support them to provide information and guidance that connects library users to other services they may require in a flexible way across the city
- We will create new volunteering employment, skills and training opportunities within our library services
- We will build connections with other city council professionals to enable appropriate support and services to be delivered alongside our library services



## Buildings

### What we will continue

We will continue to provide physical library services and maintain appropriate book and other stock within all parts of the city.

### What will change

- We will push ahead with relocation of City Central and Tunstall library services in 2022
- We will review the physical layout and use of space in our other libraries in light of the objectives of this strategy and a wider review of public and community assets within each locality, ensuring a range of opening hours that meet local needs
- We will design our libraries to form a valued part of their town centres and localities, generating additional local footfall



## Digital services

### What we will continue

We will continue to expand digital lending and provide access to IT and the internet within libraries.

### What will change

- We will support more Council digital services and transactions within libraries, for example housing applications and rent payments
- We will broaden our digital inclusion offer, providing 121 and group support on a volunteering basis
- We will broaden our range of digital activities and events so that library services are experienced in homes, nurseries, schools and a range of other appropriate settings

Library services must be financially sustainable for the city council and will also help other city council services to provide support to communities

- We will shape our physical and digital library services around what will best deliver the priorities of this strategy within each locality, and a level that is affordable and sustainable
- Our new library service offer will make a tangible contribution to managing pressure for other services provided by the council such as social care and early help
- Where capacity and space exists, we will explore further income-generating activities such as bookable desks and co-working spaces, private hire for events (including out-of-hours) and social enterprise

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STOKE-ON-TRENT LIBRARY IN 2025



Mary and Peter are connected foster carers caring for toddlers. They meet up at the library for an organised session with other foster carers to share experiences and utilise resources from the library to support the development of their children in care.



Mary, aged 72, receives friendly advice and guidance on how to make a missed rent payment online. She goes home feeling more confident about her ability to access online services in the future.



Joe attends a drop-in session to show people how they can look for jobs and fill in applications online. While he's there he remembers that when he was very young he used to love books and started borrowing and reading again.



Doris is an unpaid carer for her husband Roger, who is suffering from dementia. They visit a local history exhibition in their local library where Roger is encouraged to share his stories and memories of life in Stoke-on-Trent.



Shahin and her 6-month-old baby sees her health visitor at the local library and then joins the singing bears toddler groups. She meets a neighbour with an 8-month old baby for the first time.



Nadiya and her family found refuge in Stoke-on-Trent from a war-torn country. They were relieved and excited to find a safe place where educational resources were available for the children, as well as friendly support to find their way in the new chapter of their life in a foreign country.



Clare is receiving support in the community for mental health. At her local library she participates in an art session where she shares her skills with others and is able to exhibit her work.



Mrs. Khan meets with friends, has a coffee and then spends half an hour with a volunteer learning how to video chat with friends and family, access exercise and cookery classes and listen to her favourite music.



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