

Appendix 1: Building a Better Future: the vision and model for the Library Service

On 24 March 2020, just before the first national lockdown, the Council's Executive agreed a new vision and model for the Library Service (see item 14 at the link below) : <https://bradford.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=7327&Ver=4>

The **vision** for Bradford District library services for 2020 to 2025 is **to: 'develop a 21st century library service that continues to provide a core library service, that is flexible and enables us to enhance the quality of life of people and communities, is inclusive and vibrant, supports wider district priorities, enables all users to learn, engage and remain connected to their communities, and is outcomes focused at a local level'.**

This vision reflected a positive commitment from the Council to keep all 29 libraries open across the district, rather than making further savings. It also recognised the huge potential of libraries to support the Council's priorities and deliver more services, working in partnership with others. This is in line with the national ambition for libraries to develop as hubs of their communities.

"The information gathered [from the public consultation on Bradford Libraries in 2019/20] highlighted that libraries are much more than traditional book lending facilities, as important as that is, there are a wider range of activities that are carried out. This led us to consider what more they could offer to help support outcomes for Health and Wellbeing generally and was central to decisions taken on what the future library service might look like.....Additional investment will be used to build on the work that libraries already do in this area, e.g. activities that support improvements in social isolation like "knit and natter" and "reading groups". Library services will be developed with a focus on enhancing the public Health offer with a **particular focus on improvements against four public health outcomes: tackling poverty, addressing social isolation, assisting people back into employment and helping with school readiness.**"

The vision is supported by a number of **principles** for the service:

- Be inclusive; offering a free safe space and a place to meet for all.
- Be at the heart of the community reflecting local need supporting improved outcomes.
- Retain a core library function in line with statutory requirements
- Connect with other services allowing access to information, advice and signposting to ensure we make every contact count.
- Be creative and mindful of wider cultural ambitions
- Adopt a partnership approach to working, which brings together a range of partner organisations, local groups and education institutions – working better together for greater outcomes.

This positive new vision for the Service, cemented with £700k annual funding from Public Health and a further £100k annual funding from Adult Services, is designed to maximise the use of the assets of the Library Service (its buildings, staff, IT and connectivity in communities) to support Council priorities rather than reducing or closing services.

Officers have implemented the new vision and model, now named *Building a Better Future*, reflecting our ambitions for the service to play a key role for the Council and our communities, and to be a thriving and successful service.

As well as defining a 'core library offer' that will be delivered in *all* libraries across the District (clearly focused on the essential reading and information role of the service and built on the national library 'universal offers'), we carried out pilot project in two libraries - Keighley and Wibsey– and their communities to explore what a 'tailored offer' could look like that is specific to the needs of each of these communities.

This work is now being rolled out to Council libraries across the district, with the creation of development plans for each of the libraries, linked to the priorities of Area Plans where possible. Discussions are ongoing with colleagues in Public Health, Adult Social Care, Skills for Work, Neighbourhood Team, Children Services, and many external organisations, to explore how we can work more in partnership with them.

Libraries have great potential to fulfil an early help and prevention role for the Council and other public sector partners, providing online and printed information for people to self-help (bottom part of the pyramid below), as well as signposting and connecting into local community organisations and services that can provide more specialist support. They are ideal bases in communities for local groups, council staff and partners to meet, hold events and deliver customer facing services. The Library Service won £200k from Arts Council England to help progress this model by making library spaces more adaptable/flexible and introducing more meeting spaces.

Early help and prevention role

Multi-agency hub / panel to coordinate support around an individual. Lead Agency nominated to support and coordinate.

Local community organisations and partners have good knowledge and can signpost individuals to relevant organisations

Locality level online and printed information on community support for self help

