



Dorset
Council

Library Service

Library Strategy
Progress in 2024-2025
Priorities for 2025-2026



Our mission is to
Inspire, Connect
and **Enable** our
communities



Introduction

Libraries are a statutory service, in Dorset our statutory service is made up of 23 libraries, a 24/7 online library service, and a home library service which delivers services to residents.

The library service delivers services at the heart of our communities, supporting individuals and communities to be more connected, healthier, empowered and less isolated.

The library service has a critical role to play within the council's target operating model, serving as an effective front door for the council and connecting customers with local opportunities.

Within this report we reflect on service delivery in 2024/25 and identify priorities for the coming year.

The service has a key role to play in delivering Council Plan priorities, most notably within "Communities for All", with significant opportunity for collaboration in the Economic Growth agenda; by working collaboratively across services and sectors the service supports delivery of the Councils' vision:

"Working together to create a fairer, more prosperous and sustainable Dorset for current and future generations"

Library Strategy

The Dorset Council Library Strategy was co-designed with our communities, stakeholders and colleagues through two phases of public consultation in 2021-2023.

We received over 12,500 responses, enabling us to create a clear mission and strategic themes, that achieved over 90% approval.

The strategy provides a framework for delivering and developing services in line with the needs of our communities and Dorset Council's strategic priorities.

It is supported by a service level action plan which reflects the priorities presented in these slides.

Our vision and mission

Our **vision** is:

Trusted community spaces for everyone, with services to inspire your future.

Our **mission** is:

To **Inspire**, **Connect** and **Enable** our communities through our services.

Strategic Themes:

Inspire: Enriching lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning literacy and culture. Inspiring and supporting people, learning, businesses and the response to climate change.

Connect: To connect with and meet the needs of our communities by linking people together with each other and with services from libraries, Dorset Council and partners

Enable- our communities: To create welcoming library buildings which are accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use in many ways.

Enable- our library teams: To invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet current and future community needs and customer expectations.

2024/25 performance headlines

This year the service has navigated unprecedented change. We transformed our operating model, introduced new opening hours and implemented a new library management system. We have supported both colleagues and customers and have overcome challenges while embodying our organisational values of Respect, Openness, Together, Accountability, Curiosity and our service value of adaptability.

Alongside managing these consecutive change processes, we have continued to deliver a relevant and engaging service, making a significant impact in our communities.

As we look forward to service delivery in 2025-26, we do so with a level of determination and confidence that we have never felt before.

2024/25 progress measures - performance headlines

The library service monitors the following key performance measures and during this year we had:

1. 949,171 people visited the library
2. 1,567,762 total issues – physical and e-issues
3. 85,798 people attended our events
4. 62,366 combined total of sessions used on public network computers
5. 13,090 new customers joined the library
6. 100% of customers would recommend our services to a friend*
7. 96% of customers felt more socially connected having accessed library services*
8. 97% of customers said they felt an improvement in their mood and or wellbeing having accessed library services*

*366 people surveyed during 24/25

Action Plan Overview 2024/25

Alongside performance measures we also track progress through cumulative RAG rating of delivery plan actions:

| Objectives/Themes | Inspire | Connect | Enable: our communities | Enable: our library teams |
|-------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Aims | Support language, literacy and reading for pleasure for everyone | Customers and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer | Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces | Each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council |
| | Host and deliver events & activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences | Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection | Provide safe trusted spaces | Flexible resourcing across our library network, allows employees to develop a range of skills and experience |
| | Support people to develop digital skills removing digital barriers and building confidence | Local libraries thrive as part of a coordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries | Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth | We offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes |
| | Support an innovative and thriving macro and Small Medium Enterprise business network | Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free | Library services form part of community hubs | We have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service. We have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success |
| | Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions | Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door | Provide space where customers can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities | |

- On track
- At risk/ action required
- Off track
- Not started



Inspire: Literacy

Aim: Support language, literacy and reading for pleasure for everyone through lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills and pursuing personal goals

Achievements

Encourage development of new skills and promote the learning opportunities in Dorset

- ✓ Skills and Learning, Adult Community Education, delivered regular classes at five library sites and are permanently co-located at Dorchester and Weymouth libraries
- ✓ Read Easy sessions (volunteer led coaching programme for adults) delivered at 4 library sites
- ✓ 1,480 early years literacy events attended by 27,137 under 5s
- ✓ supported 132 class/assembly visits and early year setting visits
- ✓ 258 creative writing and poetry sessions were held in libraries

Host and promote partners and events that improve literacy and STEM education in Dorset

- ✓ delivered successful pilot project at 6 library sites for Children's Services, providing commissioned sessions to support school readiness during the summer holidays
- ✓ supported 4018 children take part in the Summer Reading Challenge
- ✓ provided free books to gift to children attending the Holiday Activity Fund and attended Easter and Summer outreach days

What's next

Encourage development of new skills and promote the learning opportunities in Dorset

- build closer working relationship with Skills & Learning
- deliver workforce training to improve signposting to adult community education
- deliver workforce training on the Dorset Archives & History Centre services (including Ancestry)
- support Family Learning Festival (October 2025)

Host and promote partners and events that improve literacy and STEM education in Dorset

- re-vamp our Summer Reading Challenge promotion to increase participation
- submit bid to Dorset's Local Alliance Groups to deliver commissioned school readiness sessions across 11 libraries in summer holidays 2025
- whole service celebration of National Coding week (September)
- deliver targeted interactive sensory sessions using a portable projection system, particularly focusing on adults and children with SEND and older adults with dementia after successful funding bid with Libraries Connected

Inspire: Literacy

Aim: Support language, literacy and reading for pleasure for everyone through lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills and pursuing personal goals

| Achievements | What's next |
|--|--|
| <p>Ensure the library collections meet customer needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ updated and published the Dorset Libraries Collection Development Policy and Collection Standards Policy✓ piloted best seller (aka fast back) lending option to help reduce queues for popular titles✓ supported the consolidation of e-books and e-magazines to one provider: BorrowBox, delivering simplified access arrangements for e-resources | <p>Ensure the library collections meet customer needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• fully implement stock standards policy• re-launch Collection HQ, our evidence-based stock management tool• use Collection HQ to identify stock gaps on key topics including: foreign language content and equality, diversity and inclusion themes• develop and deliver a promotional campaign to advertise the breadth of our foreign language stock• re-introduce and promote the Reading Agency's Reading Well Book Lists, to support health and wellbeing |



Case study: Ready for School

Six Dorset libraries piloted "Ready for School" sessions during the summer holidays to prepare children for school with engaging activities.

The sessions, following a "Library Gets Lively" format, included 45 minutes of songs, stories, and crafts centred around various themes.

Funding from Children's Services and the Local Alliance Group in Purbeck provided "Ready for School" bags for each child.

Collaboration with Local Alliance Group contacts, Best Start in Life advisors, family workers, and early years settings led to:

- 51 families
- 72 children attending

An evaluation survey showed that 70% of families felt the sessions boosted their child's confidence about starting school.



Inspire

Case study: Ready for School

Testimonials:

Family Worker at Dorchester: "As a school readiness project, I have nothing but praise. It perfectly replicated what they might expect at school. I also noticed a great deal of progress in cutting skills from the start of the course to the end!"

Parent: "Every week she looked forward to going. The activities were great, she loved being able to take home something that she had made and proudly showed everyone. She became more and more confident each week and met some other children going to her school too, which has helped her to know a few familiar faces on her first few days."



Inspire

Inspire: Culture

Aim: Host and deliver events & activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences

Achievements

Events and activities programme which meets communities needs

- ✓ developed the library events programme structure, which is made up of: our **core offer** available at all library sites, **national campaigns** we support throughout the year and **community events** developed in response to identified local need
- ✓ developed an event recommendation form for receipt of community feedback and event requests
- ✓ launched Conversation Clubs in Blandford and Weymouth in response to identified community need, supporting those who speak English as a second language
- ✓ launched Reading Friends in response to identified community need, connecting people by starting conversations through reading
- ✓ re-launched our online schools programme, four engaging events, with 7,525 children attending

What's next

Events and activities programme which meets communities needs

- fully embed our library service events programme structure: core, campaign and community events
- carry out analysis of whole network event provision, identify and address gaps, identify common themes and establish consistency across sessions so we can review and refine our “core” offer to inline with customer expectations and service capacity
- pilot a Books Beyond Words Group, facilitated sessions for people who find pictures easy to understand than words, particularly focused on supporting those with learning disabilities or cognitive or communication difficulties - looking to develop referral pathway with adult services



Inspire

Inspire: Culture

Aim: Host and deliver events & activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences

| Achievements | What's next |
|--|---|
| <p>Create cultural opportunities in Dorset, contributing to the Dorset Cultural Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ supported 17 author visits including best selling authors Dilly Court and Jasper Fforde✓ supported theatre performances such as in Weymouth Library about Mary Anning's fossils✓ libraries supported four Literary Festivals, and a range of other community led cultural events including Shaftesbury Fringe and Dorset Arts Week✓ 1098 art and craft sessions were held in the library✓ 389 reading groups and book chats were held in the library | <p>Create cultural opportunities in Dorset, contributing to the Dorset Cultural Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 libraries to host travelling theatre company Brave and the Bold• supporting Weymouth and Portland as Towns of Culture 2025 to deliver a programme of cultural and community events and activities• improve our artist booking power by introducing a "pay what you can" donations model for some culture events such as author talks• test opportunities for libraries to provide grass roots cultural space, explore funding bid to support grass roots artists |



Inspire: Digital

Aim: Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence

| Achievements | What's next |
|--|---|
| <p>Promote the development of digital skills for people of all ages, ensuring digital inclusion for everyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 17 libraries hosted 433 volunteer digital champion sessions✓ streamlined the workforce facing booking system for digital champion support✓ included embedded digital champion training as part of workforce induction pathways✓ libraries supported the council's Digital Doorway scheme issuing 36 tablets and 206 laptops to people who struggle to get online✓ took part in National Coding Week in September | <p>Promote the development of digital skills for people of all ages, ensuring digital inclusion for everyone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• run regular STEM sessions using coding toys such as Ozobots/ Codepillar in Connect and Plus Libraries• increased service celebration of National Coding week• deliver service campaign for Get Online Week in October• promote the digital champion support available at libraries to encourage increased referrals from other organisations• continue to foster close working relationships with Digital Dorset• make contact with the Dorset Skills Partnership and explore the role libraries could play in this work |



Inspire: Digital

Aim: Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <p data-bbox="191 489 1019 539">Improve digital provision at libraries</p> <ul data-bbox="191 601 1235 949" style="list-style-type: none">✓ secured funding from the Cost of Living fund to increase our iPad lending offer by 33% to 40 devices✓ revamped marketing of iPad lending service offer, including partnership promotion with Citizens Advice, Housing and DWP✓ increased iPad lending by 570% in October-March from the previous six month period April-September✓ began roll out of Windows 11 upgrades to library PCs | <p data-bbox="1291 489 2119 539">Improve digital provision at libraries</p> <ul data-bbox="1291 601 2336 949" style="list-style-type: none">• scope and launch expansion of digital device lending offer via Arts Council funding– service to explore alternatives to iPads such as laptops or Android devices to provide more choice for customers• complete roll out of Windows 11 upgrades across the library network• pilot and roll out Wi-Fi printing across the network• procure new library self service kiosks |



Inspire

Case Study: Borrow an iPad from Dorset Libraries

In 2023, Dorset Library Service launched an iPad loan scheme with 30 iPads to reduce isolation, enhance digital inclusion and to improve health, wellbeing, and employment levels. In 2024 funding was obtained from the Cost of Living fund to provide an additional 10 iPads.

The iPads come with data for free internet access, a keyboard case, and a stereo headset for online interviews and consultations. They are user-friendly and preloaded with links to websites on employment, CV writing, interview skills, benefits, and Universal Credit claims. The loan period is 6 weeks.

Users are encouraged to book 1-2-1 support sessions with the Digital Champions network, a group of volunteers skilled at explaining technology without jargon. Library staff are also available to assist and continuously update their digital skills.



Inspire

iPad lending testimonials

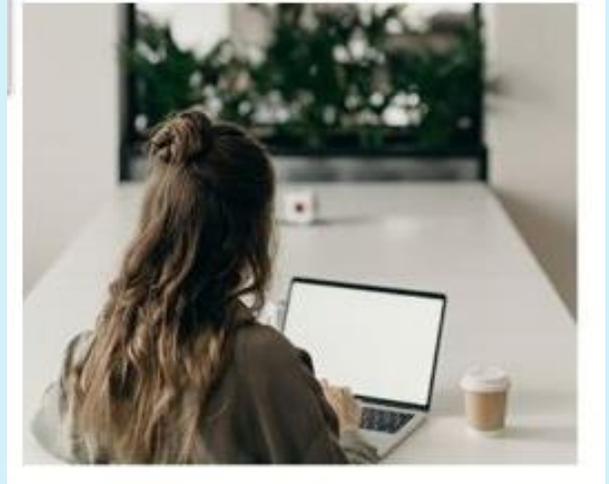
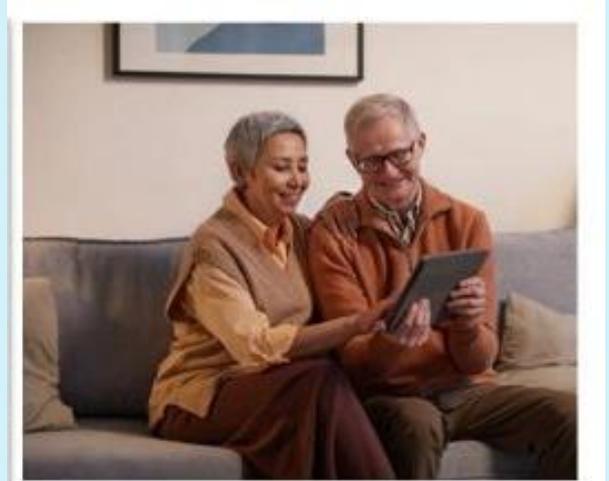
Customer Testimonials

"The iPad has been a great help in keeping up to date on jobs, accommodation, and just trying to get my life back on track."

"I have made good progress, managing to do CVs, cover letters, and disclosures on the iPad, which has helped."

"This allowed me to keep the job I have."

"I borrowed the iPad to complete online training for a volunteer role, which I can now start, so that has been successful."



Inspire

Inspire: Local Business

Aim: Support an innovative and thriving Micro and Small, Medium Enterprise business network

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ libraries offer 18 meeting rooms which are bookable by local business and this year's bookings have included opticians, water companies and local banks✓ all libraries offer free Wi-Fi, some libraries have touchdown workspace or study space available for community or business use✓ hybrid meeting room kit installed at Verwood Library to facilitate both in-person and remote communication, and available for use by the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• build relationships with Dorset's Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)• promote library meeting rooms (especially those equipped with Teams equipment) with the local businesses• explore the potential to host business networking/mentoring events• build connection with Dorset Council's Growth and Economic Regeneration Service and explore opportunities for library service support or deliver under the Council's Economic Growth priority• explore role for library service within Weymouth 2040 project |



Inspire

Inspire: Climate

Aim: Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions

Achievements

Support and facilitate partners that promote climate and ecology positive actions and role model behaviour change - reduce, reuse, recycle

- ✓ library teams supported the council's food waste survey
- ✓ libraries celebrated Green Libraries Week in October, with recycled crafts and showcased support available from Healthy Homes Dorset, Nature Recovery and Low Carbon Dorset
- ✓ hosted 2 Nappy Champion events attached to Rhyme Time sessions – promoting council's support for re-useable nappies
- ✓ hosted an energy advice drop-in session at Weymouth library in partnership with Ridgeway Energy
- ✓ hosted the council's Our Journey to Net Zero exhibition at Weymouth Library
- ✓ started using World of Books as a more sustainable option for disposal, donation or resale of all withdrawn books
- ✓ increased the number of libraries where customers can collect council waste bins, provision now available at 8 library sites

What's next

Support and facilitate partners that promote climate and ecology positive actions and role model behaviour change - reduce, reuse, recycle

- fully implement evidence-based movement of stock to ensure all van trips are efficient
- all library vans using biofuel (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) which save up to 90% of emissions compared to diesel
- bring the council's Our Journey to Net Zero Exhibition to more communities via a libraries road show
- develop promotional library service e-leaflets to reduce printing
- explore pilot of Library of Things or a Repair Café with support from our Friends of Libraries Groups
- work with the council's Climate & Ecological Sustainability Service to mark Great Big Green Week in June 2025



Inspire

Connect: Outreach

Aim: Residents and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer

Achievements

- ✓ updated library service promotional leaflets
- ✓ developed a social media plan for the service
- ✓ created a Facebook page for each local library or cluster
- ✓ developed outreach materials - physical resources such as pop-up banner, tablet with dongle and engaging props
- ✓ ensured library representation on each of Dorset's Local Alliance Group meetings, promoting library services

What's next

- complete strategic and local stakeholder mapping exercise to understand any gaps and capitalise on grassroots relationships
- train staff on social media posting especially on Facebook pages
- build the followers and engagement for each local library Facebook page
- promote Summer Reading Challenge on Dorset Council's TikTok
- re-vamp Dorset Council library webpages to make more user-friendly
- incorporate all library screens in Signage live subscription to allow streamline promotion of library and council services
- launch Outreach Training Toolkit to support workforce to delivery community outreach
- work with communications colleagues to deliver regular service promotion within all council newsletters
- develop full marketing strategy for the service



Connect

Connect: Communities

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|--|
| <p>Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ ran 809 Cuppa and Company events which fosters community connection and tackles isolation✓ made all library meeting rooms bookable via digital form✓ libraries supported 5 campaigns from Dorset Council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion calendar✓ built connections with Bibby Stockholm residents and established dedicated Reading Friends Group✓ delivered community outreach at Wyke Regis Armed Forces Hub and Blandford Camp | <p>Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• service to reconnect with newly appointed Armed Forces Covenant lead• digitise all Armed Forces Covenant resources at libraries and provide workforce training on support available• Library Teams to build local connections with Dorset's military camps, delivering outreach to: Blandford, Bovington and Chickerell• promote volunteer roles within libraries• work with the council's refugee service to understand available support and train staff to guide refugees to these resources• promote libraries as intergenerational spaces with valuable opportunity for social connection |



Connect: Libraries Network

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <p>Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's community managed libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ continue to be an active LibrariesWest Consortium member, advocating for our workforce and customers✓ implemented new workforce operating model and new library opening hours in July✓ re-established close working relationship with Friends of Dorset's Library Groups - meeting quarterly and updated Working with Friends Framework✓ continued support of Dorset's eight Community Managed Libraries, in accordance with Service Level Agreement (SLA) - refreshed all eight CML SLAs | <p>Local libraries thrive as part of a co-ordinated network of libraries including Dorset's community managed libraries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make it easier for strategic partners to work with the entire network of libraries in Dorset, via streamlined collaboration form "One Front Door Form"• gain better customer data insights through the launch of digital footfall counters and hourly footfall data - dashboard allows us to analysis customer trends |



Connect: Accessibility

Aim: Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ provision of accessible IT equipment in all libraries and designated accessible computer station✓ whole network audit to ensure all seating has high contrasting chair colours to support those with cognitive disabilities and people with low vision✓ launched Extended Access at Verwood Library allowing customers to access library services beyond staffed hours 8am-8pm, Monday to Saturday✓ improvements to Verwood Library include clearer external signage, additional seating with arms to assist those with limited mobility, and the installation of hybrid digital communication equipment in the customer meeting room✓ accessible communications standards included in workforce induction pathway to build awareness and ensure service communication is drafted with consideration to a broad range of needs including assistive technology e.g. screen readers✓ launched video tours of four library sites, to support neurodivergent customers to feel comfortable in our spaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improvements to accessibility scheduled for Sturminster Newton, Gillingham and Sherborne as part of Arts Council Funding• carry out audit of signage used in libraries to ensure they are consistent with accessibility standards• continue to implement accessibility audit recommendations made by DOTS across the service• develop an adult SEN service offer in collaboration with adults social care colleagues - starting with Books Beyond Words sessions• build upon our SENSational Story and play sessions, increase our children's SEN service offer in consultation and collaboration with children services and advocacy groups• launch a further four video tours of library sites |



Connect: Council's front door

Aim: Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities acting as the council's front door.

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ customer services training module successfully piloted and included in workforce induction pathway, training allows library teams to support a broad range of customer queries via the Council's webpages and online processes✓ all libraries designated as family hub network access points, supported via training module within workforce induction✓ co-located Family Hub launched at Dorchester Library✓ registration services co-located at two libraries✓ housing colleagues' delivery outreach services at five libraries | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• capture library service's customer transaction data to gain insight of local impact and role of our teams at resolving customer queries at first point of contact• Libraries are not just a physical network - we are a skilled and dynamic workforce integral to Council's target operating model, supporting both the pre-front door and front door services. The service remains adaptable and responsive to Our Future Council, with the ability to support front door processes, commensurate with grade and supported by training. |



Connect

Enable: our communities

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|--|
| <p>Create inviting, flexible well used spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ secured £310,000 of Government funding via Arts Council to invest in Extended Access technology for four Dorset libraries✓ made all library rooms available to hire online to improve service promotion and increase community use <p>Provide safe trusted spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ commissioned an accessibility audit of libraries network to inform an improvement plan✓ trained library staff to signpost and refer into council's refugee support services | <p>Create inviting, flexible well used spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• review how communities use our library spaces, to identify any local refinements• work with Assets and Property Service to develop an Asset Improvement Plan for our libraries network <p>Provide safe trusted spaces</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• continue to implement the recommendations of the accessibility audit• support the Pineapple Project, which seeks to safeguard young women and girls, at Weymouth, Portland, Dorchester and Swanage libraries• submit funding bid with Somerset Libraries for the Libraries as Sanctuary project supporting new arrivals• ensure libraries are welcoming and inclusive by signing up to the LGBTQ+ safe spaces promoted by Dorset Council |

Enable

Enable: our communities

| Achievements | What's next |
|---|---|
| <p>Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ removal of direct gas heating at Wyke Regis Library and Lyme Regis Library and replacement with air to air heat pumps making these two library buildings zero carbon ready✓ nine libraries received energy efficient LED lighting upgrades | <p>Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• utilise development contributions to invest in local library improvements• support a feasibility study for another phase of solar PV delivery on library buildings adding to the existing provision at Gillingham, Upton, Littlemoor and Verwood |
| <p>Library services form part of community hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ external partners: Citizen Advice, Skills and Learning, Public Health Dorset, banks and other organisations deliver services at library sites✓ NHS Speech and language colleagues dovetailed their provision to align with library rhyme time sessions and capitalise on shared customer base | <p>Library services form part of community hubs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family Hubs capital investment at Dorchester, Gillingham and Portland - including mobile shelving for more flexible library spaces• continue to promote libraries as community hubs and explore opportunities for further co-location of services at libraries |

Enable

Enable: our communities

Aims:

- provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities

| Achievements | What's next |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ worked with Dorset County Hospital Library for Health Information Week and had a display at Dorchester Library✓ ran four events in partnership with LiveWell Dorset✓ Public Health Dorset and NHS partners delivering monthly sessions in libraries including Speech and Language, Dementia Champions, NHS stroke groups, LiveWell Dorset Health Checks✓ ran 1409 events with a health and wellbeing focus with 10,228 people attending | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• co-location of midwifery service at Dorchester Library as part of Family Hub delivery• all libraries to support NHS Healthy Start scheme through distribution of free vitamins• build the library service's role within Dorset's social prescribing agenda - libraries to supply, host and connect people to social prescribing activities• build the library service's role within the council's Better Life strategy, support referrals into our service from Adult Social Care teams and explore opportunity to serve as a commissioned "spoke" within day centre opportunities |

Enable

Extended Access Launch

In 2024, Dorset Library Service received £310,000 from the Central Government's Libraries Improvement Fund to enhance four sites: Verwood, Sturminster Newton, Sherborne, and Gillingham.

The investment focuses on installing Extended Access technology at all four sites, enabling library members to use facilities beyond staffed hours. During Extended Access, customers can:

- borrow, return, and renew items using self-service kiosks
- use free library computers and Wi-Fi
- print documents
- use study spaces

Additionally, the funding will increase the number of digital devices available for borrowing across the library network.

- Verwood: launched Extended Access in February 2025
- Sturminster Newton: preparatory work completed in March 2025, with a launch planned for Spring 2025

This project aims to enhance accessibility and digital inclusion for the community, ensuring that library services are available to more people, more often.

Enable



Dorset Council

Welcome to Extended Access

Scan the QR code below for more details:



dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/extended-access-libraries

"This is a fantastic resource for the town. Now I can access at my convenience, meet people and pop in when I'm passing. I am delighted!"

Enable

Enable: our library teams

Aims:

- each employee feels valued and empowered with career opportunities in the library service, libraries sector and Dorset Council more broadly
- flexible resourcing across our library network, allows employees to develop a range of skills and experience
- we offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via development programme
- we have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service and have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success

| Achievements | What's next |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ supported a period of workforce transformation to implement our new operating model and create more flexibly resourced libraries✓ revised recruitment processes to align with role requirements✓ updated workforce induction pathways and moved online via the council's Learning Hub✓ launched workforce skills survey to celebrate skills acquired and develop bespoke development pathways for each member of the team | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• use the workforce skills survey results to recognise employees' strengths and adjust the training program to meet service needs, taking advantage of industry training opportunities• review and refine service induction pathways based on feedback• support apprenticeship opportunities for the workforce• deliver autism training for staff in collaboration with adult services• support ten work experience placements at ten library sites• provide two work placements for the council's Pathways to Employment Scheme for young people.• refresh and promote volunteering opportunities within the library service• deliver improvements to workforce processes via a streamlined event planning form |

Enable

More information

[DCMS](#)

[Libraries Connected Universal Offer](#)

[LibrariesWest](#)

[Dorset Library Strategy 2023 to 2033](#)

[Library Service Strategic Needs Assessment](#)



Dorset
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