

Communities, Strategy and Change

222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR

Report of: Assistant Director of Community Learning and Libraries

Meeting of: Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Date:

Ward(s): All

Subject: Libraries Quarter 1 & Quarter 2 2024-25 Performance Report

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council's Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures is reported through the council's Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2. This report sets out Quarter 1 & Quarter 2 2024-25 progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Library Service outcome area, for which the Homes and Communities Scrutiny Committee has responsibility.

2. Recommendations

To review the performance data for Q1 & Q2 2024/2025 for measures relating to Library Services.

3. Background

The performance measures covered by this report are largely based on the Corporate Performance Indicator set, which is refreshed annually. The performance indicators for the library service are:

- Number of library visits
- Number of library issues (physical and online)

Number of active members – someone who has used their library ticket in the past 12 months.

In addition to these Corporate Performance indicators, this report shall include data/feedback for the following:

PC usage

Library activities – number of attendees at events

User feedback.

PI No.	Indicator	2023/24	Better to be	2024/25 Q1	2024/25 Q2	Notes on measure, targets and benchmarking
CEW1	Number of library visits	835,149	↑	226,309	212,588	Target 876,906 per annum (5% increase on 2023/24 actual) per annum
CEW2	Number of Library issues (online)	291,827	↑	81,737	78,243	Target 294,745 (1% increase on 2023/24 actual) per annum
CEW3	Number of Library issues (physical)	508,491	↑	128,909	134,881	Target 508,491 (maintain at same level as 2023/24 as increase in online issues impacts physical issues)
CEW4	Active Library members	22,190	↑	N/A	N/A	Target 23,299 (5% increase on 2023/24) per annum Data only available at year end.

3.1 Corporate Indicator CEW1: Number of Library Visits: Q1 & Q2 Figure 438,897 (target 876,906)

Visits	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2024/25	226,309	212,588			438,897
2023/24	202,394	210,045	207,762	214,948	835,149

Visitor figures for Q1 & Q2 are slightly above target and above 2023/24 figures. This continues the upward trend which we have seen since reopening after the pandemic. We are not back to pre-covid figures yet but are working towards this.

3.2 Corporate Indicator CEW2: Number of Online Library Issues Q1 & Q2: 159,980

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2024/25	81,737	78,243			159,980
2023/24	62,469	69,306	76,932	83,120	291,827

This corporate indicator aims to highlight the breadth of the library offer and the uptake of online and e-resources. The issues here show the take-up of a number of resources: e-books; e-audio books; e-newspapers and e-magazines that users can access via Libby, Borrowbox and other library apps. The increase in take up of online issues reflects the growing popularity of e-resources and how users' needs have changed. With performance strong in the first 2 quarters, it is projected to be above that of 23/24. This increase in online use may potentially affect visitor figures as users no longer need to visit to select items. This increase in online use may potentially affect visitor figures too libraries as users no longer need to visit to select items.

3.3 Corporate Indicator CEW3: Number of Library Issues Physical Q1 & Q2: 263,790

Issues	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
2024/25	128,909	134,881			263,790
2023/24	121,455	131,654	123,227	132,155	508,491

The library service continues to promote physical and online stock and has a programme of stock promotions across the year, many of which link in with the cultural calendar. In Q1 & Q2 the service had stock promotions at all libraries for Eid, Refugee week, Windrush Day, the Summer Reading Challenge and Reading Ahead.

3.4 Corporate Indicator CEW4: Active Library Members

Target of 23,299 which is a 5% increase on the figure achieved in 2023/24. This data is only available at year end. The trend for the active members for the last five years is as follows:

2023/24 – 22,190
2022/23 - 20,516
2021/22 – 17,463
2021/21 - 6,954
2019/20 - 26,821.

3.5 PC Usage

All the libraries offer public computers and Wi-Fi which are free to use. In addition to using the software on the PCs and accessing the internet, users can print and scan from them. There are a total of 120 computers across all the 10 libraries.

Over the past 10 years or so we have seen a reduction in the demand for PCs as more people have their own devices and broadband at home and use space in the libraries to access free wi-fi on tablets, phones and other devices. In 2011/12 usage of PCs was approximately 60% take up of all available pc hours. By 2023/24 this dropped to 25%.

Going forward as we refurbish libraries and budgets allow, we will be look to reduce the number of public PCs and increase the number of spaces for library users to use their own devices.

The PC booking system provides detailed reports on the uptake of the public PCs, with usage currently standing at approximately 25% take up of all available sessions overall.

Library	No. of PCs	Q1 PC usage (hours)	Q1 PC hours available	Percentage take up of PC hours	Q2 PC usage (hours)	Q2 PC hours available	Percentage take up of PC hours
Archway	10	1535	4365	34%	1645	4680	35%
Cat & Mouse	6	378	2223	17%	355	2280	16%
Central	34	6032	24565	25%	5902	25636	23%
Finsbury	11	2075	7359	28%	2018	7722	26%
Lewis Carroll	3	7.5	957	0.7%	5	1033.5	0.5%
Mildmay	12	1004	4632	22%	862	4758	18%
N4	12	2704	6912	39%	3081	7674	40%
North	12	1322	4758	28%	1368	4758	29%
South	11	1232	4801.5	26%	1096	5148	21%
West	9	843	4212	20%	1057	4212	25%
Total	120	17,133			17,389		

4. Number of Residents attending Events and Activities in Libraries

- 4.1. In 2023/24, the service recorded 57,208 attendees to a wide range of events across the library service. This was well-above above the target of 32,000 and represented attendance of approximately 26% of the Islington population.
- 4.2. The free activities on offer cut across a range of themes under the Library Service strapline of Read, Learn, and Connect. They are responsive to community need and support the 7 Universal Library Outcomes identified by the Department for

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in their strategic ambition for public libraries, 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 – 2021.

The 7 universal library outcomes are:

1. Increased reading and literacy
2. Cultural and creative enrichment
3. Improved digital access and literacy.
4. Happier and healthy lives
5. Stronger more resilient communities
6. Helping everyone achieve their full potential.
7. Greater prosperity

These universal outcomes are referenced in our Library Strategy and events offered reflect these as well as the Council's Islington together 2030 plan and its five missions.

- Child Friendly Islington
- Fairer together
- Safe place to call home.
- Community Wealth building
- Greener, healthier Islington

Working to these priorities, the Libraries Service has developed a range of activities that engage with local people through offer bespoke and themed activities throughout the year and has a network of partners who have a range of regular activities and.

Some of the regularly timetabled activities include:

- Weekly under-fives and baby bounce sessions
- Chess and games clubs for adults and children
- Reading groups for adults and children
- Gentle exercise class for older adults
- Gadget support sessions
- Knit and natter groups.
- Lego clubs for children
- Toy libraries.

4.3. In 2023/24, In Q1, a total of 14,561 attendees took part in a wide range of events. There were 947 events with 6,767 child and 7,794 adult attendees.

4.4. In Q2, a total of 15,451 attendees took part in 979 events; 7,298 children and 8,153 adult attendees.

Library	Number of Attendees at events Q1	Number of Attendees at events Q2	Total number of attendees Q1 & Q2
Archway	1452	1771	3223
Cat & Mouse	1016	1262	2278
Central	2859	2997	5856
Finsbury	1560	1214	2774
Lewis Carroll	699	914	1613
Mildmay	1472	1495	2967
N4	929	1010	1939
North	1569	1990	3559
South	980	996	1976
West	2025	1802	3827
Total	14,461	15,451	30,012

4.5. The table below shows the range and number of activities during Q1 & Q2 broken down per month. Across the two quarters we ran a total **1926** events.

	Baby Bounce Under-5s Toy Library	Chess /games clubs	Comic / poetry	Craft	Exercise sessions	Gadget support	Knit/stitch	Lego clubs	Other	Story sessions
April	119	31	27	36	28	17	8	21	22	22
May	113	29	21	30	31	14	7	17	24	18
June	111	36	21	19	26	10	8	27	32	22
July	126	34	17	28	31	23	6	18	41	16
Aug	117	34	19	47	32	14	9	22	52	22
Sept	114	32	18	5	28	14	8	21	14	17
Totals	700	196	123	165	176	92	46	126	185	117

Q1 & Q2 included a mix of seasonal events to celebrate Eid, Easter, Refugee week, Reading Ahead, and the Summer Reading Challenge. Events included:

- Easter/Eid and May half term holiday family events at all Libraries.
- Reading Ahead award ceremony – to recognise the achievements of new adult readers
- Afghan Refugee display “Our home” at Central Library to celebrate Refugee week.

- Launch of Summer Reading Challenge for children – sign up Saturday 6 July. Fun day at all libraries to encourage children to sign up to the Summer Reading Challenge.
- World Book Night event – Author Kia Abdullah event at West Library and free book give away at all libraries.
- Author events – Viv Albertine writer and former singer with the punk group the Slits, Bob Gilbert writer and environmentalist, Pam Williams of Grenadian heritage writing about her family's experiences.
- Storytelling session at Central Library to celebrate South Asian Heritage month – with author Chitra Soundar and the Mayor.
- Art workshop with royal portrait artist Phillip Butah – 2 sessions with schools at West and Finsbury library. Family session at Central library
- Summer Holiday activities for children and families – 74 activities across all 10 libraries.

4.6. In 2024, 851 completed the Summer Reading Challenge, in comparison with 874 in 2023. However, the percentage of starters who completed in 2024 in comparison to 2023 increased from 45% to 49%.

4.7. In addition to events and activities, library staff have carried out a large amount of community outreach in Q1 & Q2. This outreach activity enables library staff to make contact with a large number of local organisations and residents as well as promote the whole range of services we offer. All libraries have a community profile which lists all the local organisations, community centres, school etc and staff try to have regular contact with all of the organisations within their local area.

4.8. In Q1 & Q2 outreach activity included:

Intergenerational event at Ecology Centre

Storytelling session at Hornsey Family Hub

Cost of living events/ Age UK events

A stall at Barnsbury Fun day and West Library used for range of activities.

Visits to primary schools to promote the Summer Reading Challenge which started 6.7.2024.

Visits to stay and play sessions at Children's centres.

4.9. The library service plays a key role in supporting local priorities and manifesto commitments and the services that deliver on them. Some of the activities that were run in local libraries in Q1 & Q2 included:

Employment support delivered by the Youth Employment Team via the Youth Employment Hub based at West Library

Employment and skills support delivered by Adult Community Learning via First

Steps Learning Centre based at Central Library

Digital Upskilling delivered by ACL via Islington Computer Skills Centre , based at Finsbury Library

English Language and Maths classes delivered by ACL at Cat & Mouse Library

Recruitment of carers and promotion of the Shared Lives Service across a number of libraries.

Planning consultation held at Mildmay Library.

Climate Change and Transport consultation sessions with residents at Central Library.

Family support sessions at Mildmay, delivered by Bright Futures.

The use of Finsbury, Mildmay and N4 library as polling stations.

- 4.10. The library service offers work experience opportunities to young people and in Q1 & Q2 we had 10 work experience placements across all 6 libraries / twins. We also had 8 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers start. In addition, we offered work experience placements at the Education library Service to 9 young people from the Courtyard school who have SEND.
- 4.11. A free SIM card initiative started at Central, Finsbury, Archway, South, N4, West Library in collaboration with the Good Things Foundation.
- 4.12. Easy Read – an adult literacy initiative which pairs up adults with volunteer coaches to improve their reading and literacy. Pairs use library spaces for 1:1 coaching sessions held at Central, South, North and Cat & Mouse libraries.

5.0 Feedback from users

5.1 The library service receives a large amount of feedback from users through a range of means, including customer talk back forms, via the website, or Contact Islington.

5.2 In Q1 & Q2 a total of 59 compliments/suggestions, comments and complaints were received.

Examples include:

- Archway Library staff give an excellent service. Staff are patient, kind and helpful.
- Reservation service is excellent. Received a request in one day.
- Library user tried to open and print emails. It was so slow the user gave up.
- Library user unhappy that the toilet at Archway was out of order.

We also receive a large amount of feedback via evaluation forms completed at events.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

6.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

The libraries service is committed to contributing towards achieving a net-zero carbon Islington by 2030. All libraries are collection points for recycling bags and food waste bags and in December the Home Library Service started using an electric van.

6.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because this report is looking at historical performance information and does not relate to a new policy, procedure, function, service activity or financial decision. Where a new policy, procedure, function, service activity or financial decision is mentioned

in the commentary within this report, there should be a separate Equalities Impact Assessment for that specific development, rather than attached to the reporting on performance for any measures that this would affect.

The libraries service continues to offer a service that is inclusive, accessible, welcoming and relevant to all. Addressing inequalities is central to the 'Read, Learn, Connect' mission of libraries, and is reflected in opening hours, stock, the online offer (where e-audiobooks support those who have visual conditions access library materials); the activities offered (such as Eid craft events); thematic displays (such as for Pride and Black History months).

Operating within the Directorate of Community Engagement and Wellbeing, working alongside the Equalities team and reporting to the Executive member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion, the Library Service is committed to developing an even stronger offer that addresses inequalities by mapping the offer to need and addressing gaps where they may be identified.

7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

This report has presented a detailed narrative describing the performance of Libraries Services in Quarter 3 2023-24. Where performance is off target, a summary of the actions being undertaken to improve performance has been included.

Appendices:

- None

Background papers:

- None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

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Date: 30.10.2024

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