



**York Library Services**  
**Needs Assessment 2018**

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## 1.0 Background

City of York Council has a statutory duty to provide a library service:

*It shall be the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof (Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964, section 7).*

In 2014, the staff of York's libraries and archives service established a community benefit society, Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd. (Explore York), to operate the council's libraries. The council entered into a 5 year contract with them. This contract expires on 31 March 2019 at which point the council will need to enter into a new contract setting out what we want from our library service over the next period. This needs assessment will help inform the contract. It will do this by bringing together what we know about :

- York's demographics – the make-up of the city's population and their needs
- The Council's objectives - the key policies relevant to the library service and how libraries can help to deliver on them
- The current service – how York's service is performing currently and to what extent it is meeting residents' needs
- Residents' needs – what the public has told us through the consultation that we have undertaken

York's libraries are currently very successful. Explore York has introduced many new services, visitor numbers and book issues are good, and the service offers excellent value for money. We know that library users are very satisfied with the current service. Nonetheless, we don't intend to stand still. We want to continue to innovate, building on past success to ensure that the service continues to meet changing needs and expectations in the years ahead.

We also need to be ever more efficient. The council as a whole needs to make savings and, looking at what we spend on libraries, we believe it is both important and possible to make sure that all our provision provides good value for money. We can see a big difference in how much individual libraries cost, ranging between £3.44 per visit and just 22p per visit. We need to look at innovative ways to provide excellent services whilst saving money.

## 2.0 York's Characteristics

York's population is estimated to be just over 200,000 made up of 51.4% males and 48.6% females. The city is becoming more culturally and religiously diverse with a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population of 9.8% (non White British) compared to 4.9% in 2001. By 2025, it is estimated that the 65+ population in York will have increased by a fifth, the 85+ population by about two fifths, and the 0-19 population by about 9%. Some key characteristics are:

- York's population is on the whole healthy (in a recent survey, 83.9% stated that they are in very good or good health compared to 80% regionally and 81.2% nationally). But this is not true of all communities and groups with 15.3% stating that they have some limitation in day to day activities.
- The median gross weekly earnings of residents is £519 compared with £502 regionally and £553 nationally.
- 1.9% of the working population (aged 16-64) claim out of work benefits and 0.2% claim job seekers allowance.
- 66% of residents own their own home, either outright or with a mortgage; 18% are private renters and 14% are social tenants
- 73.5% of residents have a Level 1 - 4 qualification, of which 62.9% are, at least, qualified to Level 2, but 18.0% have no qualifications at all.
- 7.8% of children live in a household where a parent or guardian claims an out-of-work benefit and there are 10.7% of households in fuel poverty.

Key planning considerations for library services will be as follows:

**Age:** Age will be a significant factor in planning library services given the projections set out above. Generally, community libraries catchments have an older population than York Explore and the three Explore Library Learning Centres. In the areas served by York Explore and the Explore Library Learning Centres, there are a greater proportion of younger adult residents – in Tang Hall and York City Centre there are a lot of single people aged 20 to 24 without children; and in Acomb and Clifton there are a lot of married people aged 30 to 39. Community library catchments generally have much older populations, where around 26% of residents are aged 65+. This is less the case in Fulford, which more closely matches the pattern for York as a whole.

While the catchments served by the community libraries have a greater proportion of older people, the Age UK risk of loneliness measure points

more towards the York Explore and Explore Library Learning Centre catchments as being the areas where there is the greatest likelihood of older people suffering loneliness. This measure takes into account not just the number of older people, but other factors such as marital status and health.

**Ethnicity:** Generally, York Explore and the three Explore Library Learning Centres catchment areas are more ethnically diverse than those of the community libraries. In the York Explore and Explore Library Learning Centre catchment areas  $\geq 10\%$  residents are BME, and in the case of the community libraries the figure is  $\leq 5\%$ . The exceptions are Acomb and Fulford. Acomb has fewer BME residents than the other Explore Library Learning Centres, and Fulford has the highest proportion in York (25%) which may relate to Imphal Barracks and the university.

**Disability:** The proportion of residents whose day to day activities are limited by illness or disability is 15% across York, and does not have much variation from one ward to another. The most significant need is at New Earswick with 21%.

### 3.0 Policy Objectives

York's library services need to contribute to the following key policy areas:

#### 3.1 Creating resilient communities

In York, people are increasingly coming together to define what they want, to find new ways to meet their needs and to deliver services. People's strengths, skills and networks are being harnessed to provide self-supporting networks and a deep reservoir of community resources that people can draw upon to keep well, to be independent and to lead fulfilled lives. Our aim is to encourage resilient communities that:

- Are self-managing and less reliant on the council and other agencies for help
- Are able to minimise the disruption to everyday life that unforeseen events present
- Enable people to be more resourceful
- Enable people to have more control of their own lives
- Ensure people are equipped and willing to play a part in community life

In this context, we need our library services to work alongside the council to help bring people together. They can provide some of the resources - the buildings, infrastructure and staffing - to help more people build on their strengths and tap into local networks as well as a diverse range of locally available support:

- Ensuring that people have appropriate advice and information to keep them resilient, independent, happy and healthy
- Working with and supporting other partners in the community to build capacity, supporting the growth of social networks and social action, bringing all sectors together in projects that deliver on local priorities
- Supporting people and communities to find the help they need to maintain their resilience and independence and participate fully in community life - led by intelligence
- Supporting those partners working to intervene early with those at risk of losing their independence or with escalating levels of need
- Supporting council teams working together within local areas to share intelligence and problem-solve
- Supporting the city's volunteering strategy, *People Helping People*, to scale up social action through impact volunteering
- Supporting and providing a base for the work of ward teams

**Local Area Coordination:** This is a long-term, integrated, evidence-based approach to supporting people with disabilities, mental health needs, older people and their families or carers. It works on the principle of earlier intervention, helping people to be resilient and self-supporting as far as possible, working alongside them to:

- Build and pursue their personal vision for a good life,
- Stay strong, safe and connected as contributing citizens,
- Find practical, non-service solutions to problems wherever possible, and
- Build more welcoming, inclusive and supportive communities

York became the 12<sup>th</sup> UK city to join the National LAC Network in 2016 and commenced its Local Area Coordination programme in May 2017 with the recruitment of three Coordinators in Tang Hall, Westfield and Huntingdon & New Earswick. The programme will be expanded to further areas in 2018. The Local Area Coordinators will work closely with the network of libraries across the city, connecting people with these community resources to access information and advice, alongside the

opportunity to volunteer themselves at a local library and become information champions.

### 3.2 Community assets

Library buildings have an important role in supporting resilient communities. As such, they are recognised within the council's Asset Management Strategy 2017-2022 as important community assets. A number of developments have already taken place or are underway to create library premises that provide multi-use community facilities (e.g. the Centre@Burnholme, and the new library at the refurbished New Earswick Folk Hall which will come on stream this year).

The trend needs to continue of providing a more holistic offer to communities, whilst seeking income generating models such as that found at Rowntree Park Reading Café. The asset strategy calls for maximising positive outcomes for communities and protecting services by:

- Reducing building costs through rationalisation of assets and creating efficiencies
- Co-location of Council and other public sector services
- Generating income to support service delivery
- Supporting the council and partners to achieve joined up services - buildings should not be exclusive to one particular service and community spaces should where possible be flexible and adaptable to support a range of uses
- Assets being operated by the community where a community group is best placed to deliver outcomes

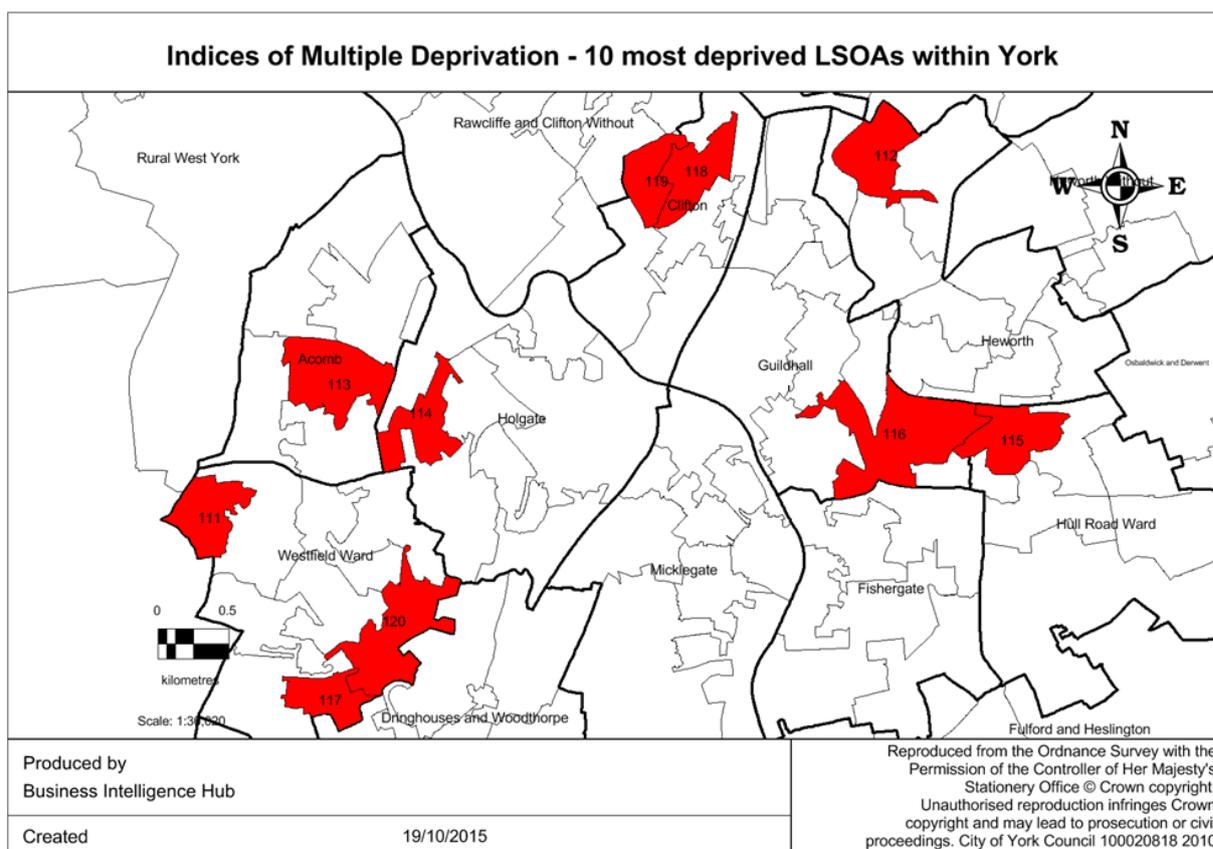
### 3.3 Inclusion

In York, many people enjoy a good quality of life with access to the things they need to thrive as individuals and communities. But we know that not everyone has equal access to the same opportunities. We believe our city will only fulfil its collective potential if everyone who lives, works and visits here can reach their own individual potential, where people can access opportunities and realise their aspirations, and are not limited because of who they are or where they live.

Those areas of the city that are experiencing deprivation are, in many ways, those with the most to gain from library services. Libraries can offer relevant services such as literacy support, learning & skills development, support with job-seeking, public health initiatives,

assistance with information and advice on personal finance, helping people to get on-line, and a myriad of other services which all address needs arising from deprivation.

The geographical pockets of highest need in York fall into the catchment areas of York Explore and the three Explore Library Learning Centres. Of York's 120 lower super output areas, the ten most deprived all fall into the catchment areas of York, Acomb, Clifton and Tang Hall. These ten areas are within England's bottom 30% of super output areas according to the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015.



In terms of York's community libraries, New Earswick and Dringhouses are also situated in or near to some areas of relative deprivation, falling within England's bottom 40% on the IMD2015.

The same areas of deprivation are highlighted when the IMD is split into its constituent categories: income, employment, education, health, crime and living environment; however, when we look at the "barriers to services" domain of the IMD this brings in some areas which would not otherwise be considered deprived – Acaster Malbis, Dunnington, Rufforth & Askham Bryan, Towthorpe & Earswick. This is due to the physical distance these residents need to travel to visit a Post Office, School, General Store and/or GP surgery.

Other indicators of deprivation tend to underline what was found in the IMD2015, where the greatest need is in the York and Explore Library Learning Centre areas:

**Residents in fuel poverty:** The catchment areas for York Explore and the three Explore Library Learning Centres tend to have  $\geq 10\%$  of residents living in fuel poverty whilst the community libraries have  $\leq 8\%$ , with the single exception of Fulford Library which has 11% of residents living in Fuel Poverty. (Source: Department of Energy & Climate Change, via CYC Business Intelligence Hub)

**Children living in poverty:** The catchment areas for York Explore and the three Explore Library Learning Centres tend to have  $\geq 12\%$  of child residents living in poverty, whilst the community libraries have  $\leq 8\%$ , again with a single exception, in this case Poppleton Library, the catchment of which has 12% of child residents living in poverty. (Source: HM Revenue & Customs via CYC Business Intelligence Hub)

**Social housing tenants:** The York Explore and Explore Library Learning Centre catchment areas tend to have  $\geq 15\%$  of residents who are social tenants, whilst the community libraries have  $\leq 10\%$ . The single exception in this case is New Earswick, which has 20% of residents who are social tenants. (Source: CYC Business Intelligence Hub).

**Digital exclusion:** York is the UK's first Gigabit City, with outstanding 'world-class' connectivity that is helping to create jobs, attract investment and improve the lives of people who live, learn, work in and visit the city. We are aware, however, of the potential for a 'digital divide' whereby some citizens and business may not be able to access the full benefits of York's connectivity. Whilst figures are not available detailing the number of households without internet access in different parts of York, the council's analysis, based on Mosaic postcode profiling, indicates that areas where library users are least likely to have home internet access are those in the catchment areas of York Explore and Tang Hall, Acomb and Clifton Library Learning Centres.

York recognizes the importance of measuring digital needs so that when services are developed or updated we have in-depth knowledge of the target audience's digital skill level. The council wants to collaborate with partners on measuring digital skills to help our understanding of the reasons why digital exclusion may occur, whether that be through access to devices, low digital skills, confidence and/or motivation.

Through the council's involvement in the regional Digital Enterprise (DE) programme we are also seeking to support our small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with their digital skills requirements, and this will involve working with Make It York and the Business Improvement District (BID) team to use their links and close working relationships with York's SMEs. The council is also engaging with schools through code clubs to help our progress as a technological city.

The implications for library services of this identified need will lie in engaging with library users and communities more broadly in programmes that identify users' digital skills and provide practical assistance to raise skill levels and to access particular digital systems and applications from which they might otherwise be excluded.

Other indicators such as residents on out of work benefits or childhood obesity tend to be consistent across all areas.

Library services can help address these inclusion needs through specific library services and more broadly in the following areas:

**Financial resilience:**

- Encouraging and supporting networks and shared awareness of services and opportunities
- Sharing of practical examples of good practice and support within communities
- Supporting and promoting initiatives which encourage effective budgeting practices and income maximisation

**Jobs and skills:**

- Gathering and understanding the key offer in each local community
- Connecting professionals to networks and resources
- Supporting key individuals within the local community who can influence and support community development
- Seeking out volunteers to support particular projects and offer opportunities to gain valuable experience
- Referring individuals to appropriate programmes to support their development

**Business and enterprise:**

- Supporting and promoting local events such as jobs fairs
- Offering information and signposting to those with aspirations around starting their own business

**Community capacity building:**

- Networking, establishing contacts and developing relationships
- Support local volunteering, encouraging good practice in identifying roles, recruiting, developing and retaining volunteers

**3.4 Learning and skills**

The Council's ambition is for *A Prosperous City for All* where local businesses can thrive, residents have the opportunity to get good quality and well paid jobs and everyone in York is supported to achieve their full potential, making sure no one is left behind.

Libraries in York have long supported this aspiration through a partnership with the council's learning services to deliver learning through library learning centres and other community facilities. The partnership aims to:

- Build a culture of informal learning across the City
- Support people to drive their own learning both individually and through self-organised groups
- Broaden choice, clarify opportunities and facilitate progression through better information provision
- Deliver and support e learning by offering state of the art technology and training

Libraries remain central to delivery of the community learning offer. Key needs are:

- A broad informal learning offer with clear progression routes - enabling learners to make progress from informal learning for example, a reading group to more structured learning for example in an accredited ICT course
- Multiple entry routes to learning - enabling learners to access learning in many different ways and easily progress to other learning, e.g from a reading group to a language class, from a basic computer taster course to a more complex accredited programme
- A community based library service supporting learning - Universities and colleges all have their own library. York public library service can support adult community based learning across the city through the provision of stock, access to the internet and space to study

- Developing digital participation - ensuring that everyone has access to a computer and can easily learn how to get onto the internet, tackling the digital divide
- A community based learning network - the continued development of flexible ICT centres is essential to ensure that learners have access to ICT and skills for life programmes
- Developing and supporting adult literacy
- Supporting older learners - as we experience an increasingly ageing population, supporting this group to increase skills for employment and leisure

### 3.5 Health and wellbeing

York's Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims for every single resident of York to enjoy the best possible health and wellbeing throughout the course of their life:

- By promoting greater independence, choice and control
- Building up community based support
- By supporting self-care and management
- With greater use of early help though targeted/short term interventions
- By imaginative use of new technology
- With fewer people using statutory services

The contribution of library services will lie predominantly in the areas of:

- Mental Health and wellbeing: helping to ensure that York has a mental health friendly environment as well as a dementia-friendly environment
- Starting and growing well: helping to reduce inequalities in outcomes for groups including children eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after, young carers and refugees and helping to promote healthy choices
- Living and working well: helping to reduce inequalities in outcomes for particular groups, including those living in the poorer wards and vulnerable groups, offering a range of support to help residents make good choices about their own health and wellbeing, promoting the benefits of healthy lifestyles, helping people to access the services to help them to help themselves
- Ageing well: celebrating the role that older people play in making York such a special place, helping people to remain independent

for longer, supporting the vital contribution of York's carers, and getting involved in social prescribing

### **3.6 Information advice and guidance**

Following a comprehensive review of information and advice provision in the city during 2016, the council has recently developed a new Information and Advice Strategy and action plan. This recognises that for all citizens, but in particular people with health and social care needs care needs, good information and advice is:

- At the heart of personalised care
- Critical to promoting wellbeing and helping people manage their own health
- Helps people to access informal sources of support and optimise use of community assets
- Gives people better access to services which prevent and / or delay need for more expensive forms of care
- Promotes choice
- Requires ownership and coordination across all sectors.

The provision of information and advice is a key building block within the council's Corporate Plan, and linked 'community operating model' and is further reflected within the Care Act (2014) which places new duties on councils to ensure the coherence and availability of information and advice in each local area. Libraries provision will be at the heart of delivering this strategy reflecting their role as community hubs and providers of information and advice.

Through focussing on early intervention, prevention and asset based approaches, the provision of universal information and advice will avoid the use of high cost services, and support citizens and communities to build resilience and stay strong within their homes and neighbourhoods.

A new citizen wellbeing portal – 'Live Well York' will act as the 'go to' website for the city encouraging an asset based approach to building health and wellbeing through a comprehensive on line community directory, which the libraries have been instrumental in helping develop. Building up community based support is also a key 'enabler' identified within the strategy and this is complemented within the action plan through the desire to build 'community hubs' and maximising the use of local assets.

### 3.7 The cultural offer

The council sees culture as playing a key role in the city's economy and place-making as well as contributing to health and wellbeing. The Council is working with its partners to create a new cultural strategy which will make a *Fresh Loud Statement of Cultural and Visual Identity*, building on York's strengths to develop a cultural offer that is 'exciting', 'inventive', 'ahead of the curve'.

The contribution of the library service to the cultural strategy will lie primarily in helping to engage residents, promoting York's cultural offer, and facilitating collaboration. The outcomes that the service can contribute to are that:

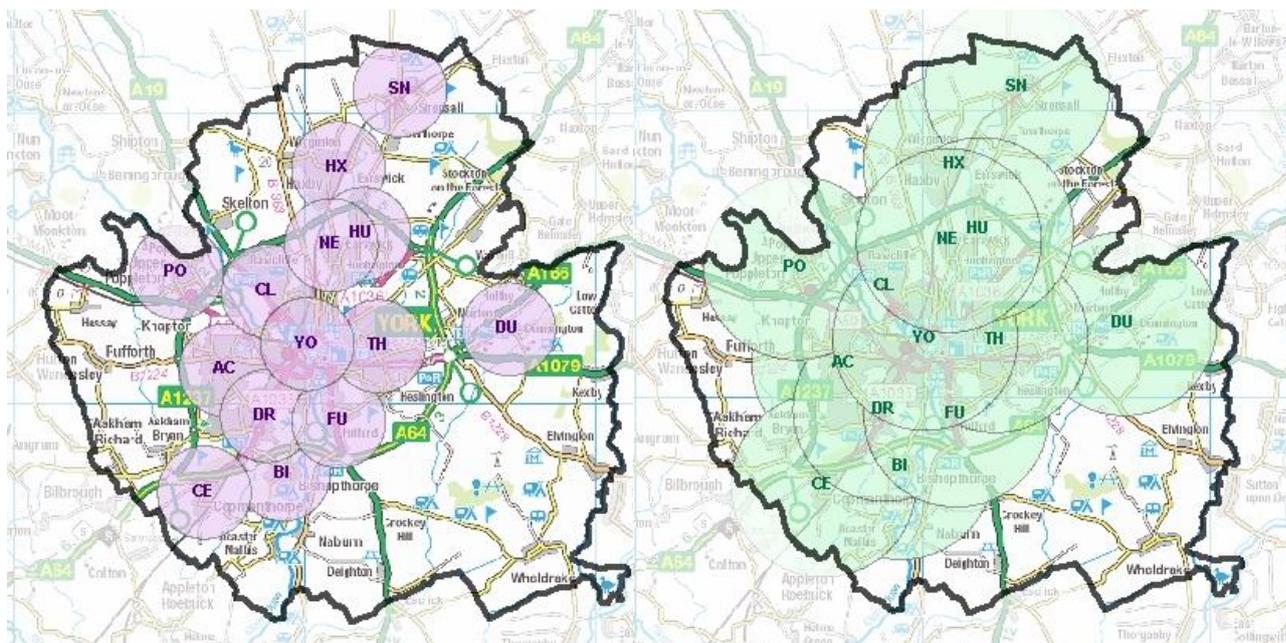
- The people of York are active participants in cultural activity
- The people of York are strong advocates for culture in the city
- York residents are supported in their right to create culture and have public opportunities to curate culture
- York takes a collaborative approach to audience development and engagement

In the consultation, non-users particularly identified activities for children and families as being likely to encourage their participation. This therefore identifies a possible focus for cultural activities within libraries. York's cultural needs are consistent with the Society of Chief Librarians *Universal Cultural Offer* whereby, *People enjoy a quality and diverse cultural experience in libraries*, and the *Stretch Offer*, whereby *Library services should deliver a clear, consistent, and accessible programme of cultural activities and events, based on a wide range of cultural experiences*.

### 4.0 The Current Service

The service provides 14 static libraries (of which one is currently replaced by a temporary dedicated mobile facility due to the emergency closure of the building), 1 reading café, 1 mobile library, and a home library service. There is also currently a pop-up reading café at Homestead Park delivered in partnership with Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (not shown below).





Static Libraries with 1 mile buffer zone

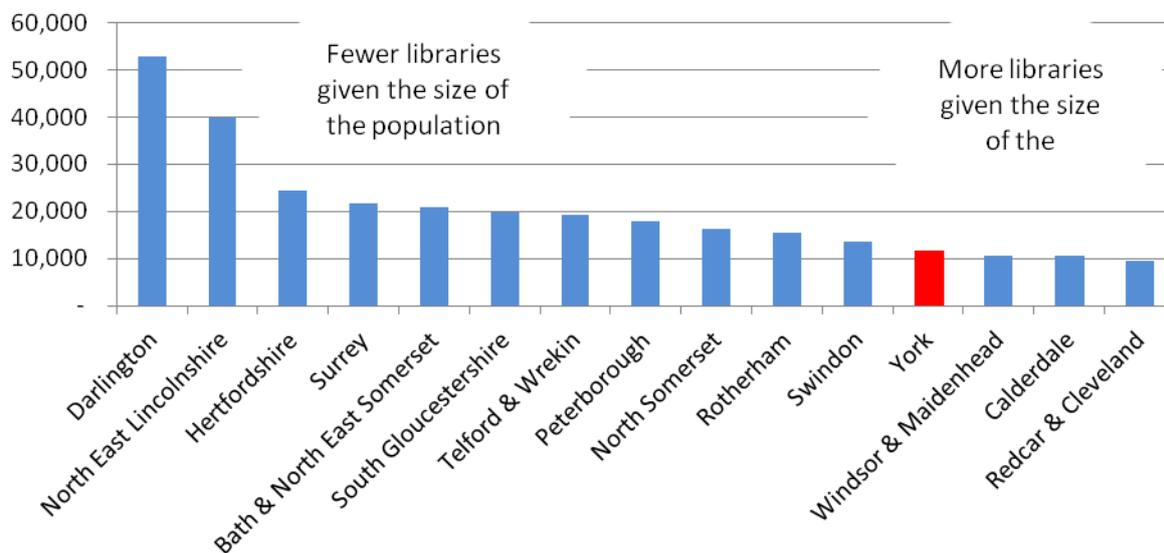
Static Libraries with 2 mile buffer zone

(Note that these maps include Haxby as a static library although it is temporarily being run from a dedicated mobile facility.)

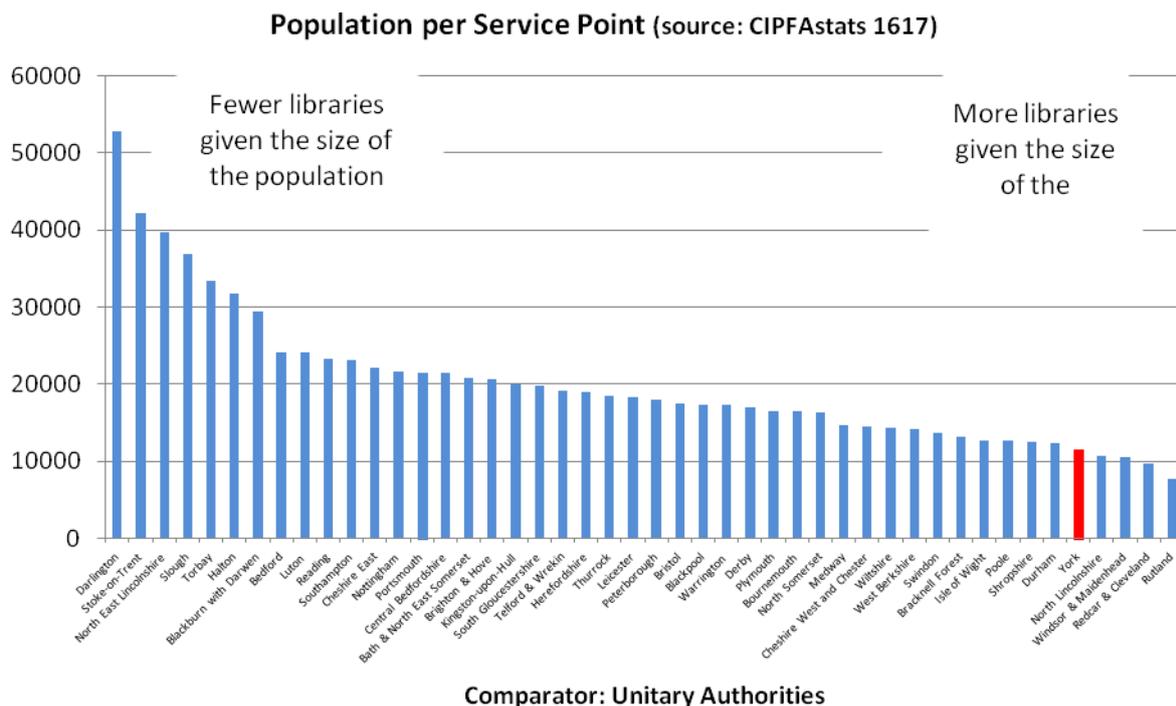
### 4.1 Number of libraries

York has a relatively high number of library branches for its population size. These graphs show York compared firstly to other unitary authorities and secondly to any authorities with a similar population density. (See the Library Pen Portraits for more on the distinct communities served by Explore’s branches).

Population per Service Point (source: CIPFAstats 1617)



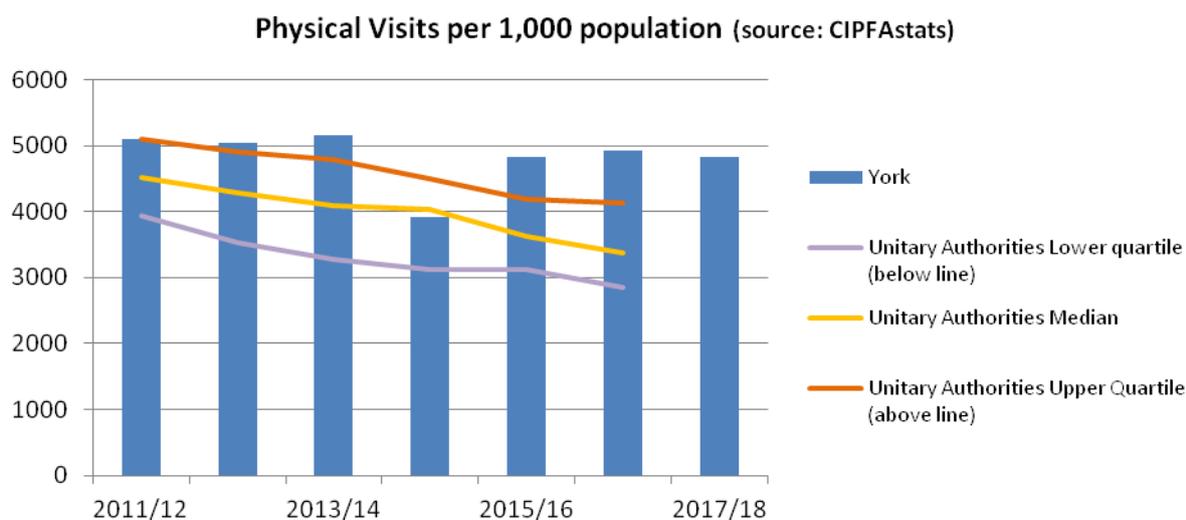
Comparator: English Authorities with a population density of 5 to 10



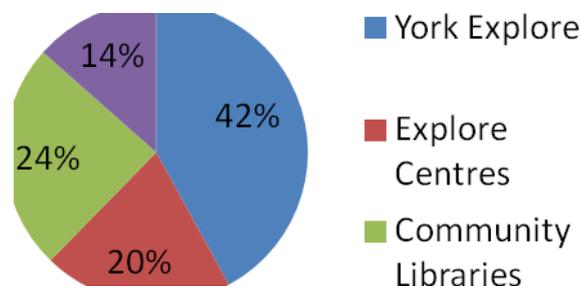
## 4.2 Usage of libraries

In spite of the national trend of library visits declining slightly over time, Explore's footfall has been holding up well, thanks in large part to the reading cafés which have been opened. Compared to other English unitary authorities, Explore's performance is upper quartile.

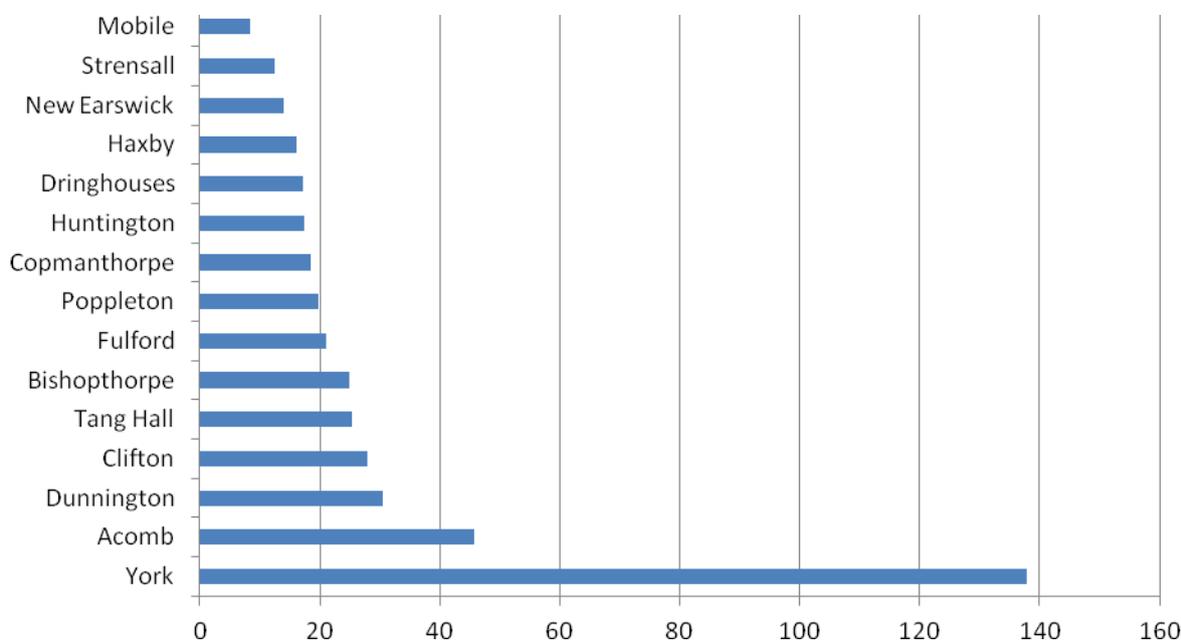
Explore's footfall in 17/18 across all branches was 1,014,173.



<b>Visits including Reading Cafes</b>		<b>1718</b>
<b>1</b>	York	426440
<b>2</b>	Acomb	109785
<b>3</b>	Rowntree Park	93253
<b>4</b>	Tang Hall	55352
<b>5</b>	Homestead Park	42693
<b>6</b>	Clifton	40212
<b>7</b>	Bishopthorpe	28397
<b>8</b>	Huntington	25734
<b>9</b>	Haxby	25337
<b>10</b>	Fulford	25322
<b>11</b>	New Earswick	24544
<b>12</b>	Copmanthorpe	23164
<b>13</b>	Poppleton	23137
<b>14</b>	Dringhouses	22924
<b>15</b>	Dunnington	20404
<b>16</b>	Mobile	14091
<b>17</b>	Strensall	13129
<b>18</b>	Sycamore House	255



### Visits per Opening Hour



These figures cover the half terms in October 2017 and February 2018 to exclude anomalies caused by classroom use of libraries at New Earswick and Fulford.

User data shows that York's libraries have an impressive reach across all sections of the population; however, some sections of the community do use libraries more than others. Women are over-represented at 62% of Explore users. This is a common trend across libraries nationally and York's figure is within 1% of the national figure.

Economically inactive people are also over-represented among library users; this over-representation applies to retired people, people with long term disabilities, the unemployed and carers. 28% of York's library customers are affected by ill health or disability (compared to 15.3% of York's population), which is a credit to the accessibility of the buildings. On the other hand, people who are employed or self-employed (full time or part time) are under-represented among library users (42% of adult population, compared to 61% in the population). This holds true across all types of library, which is particularly surprising given that the Explore Library Learning Centres are more likely to be open outside working hours so in theory have more scope to attract working adults than the community explore libraries do.

The breakdown of users by ethnicity is representative of York's population.

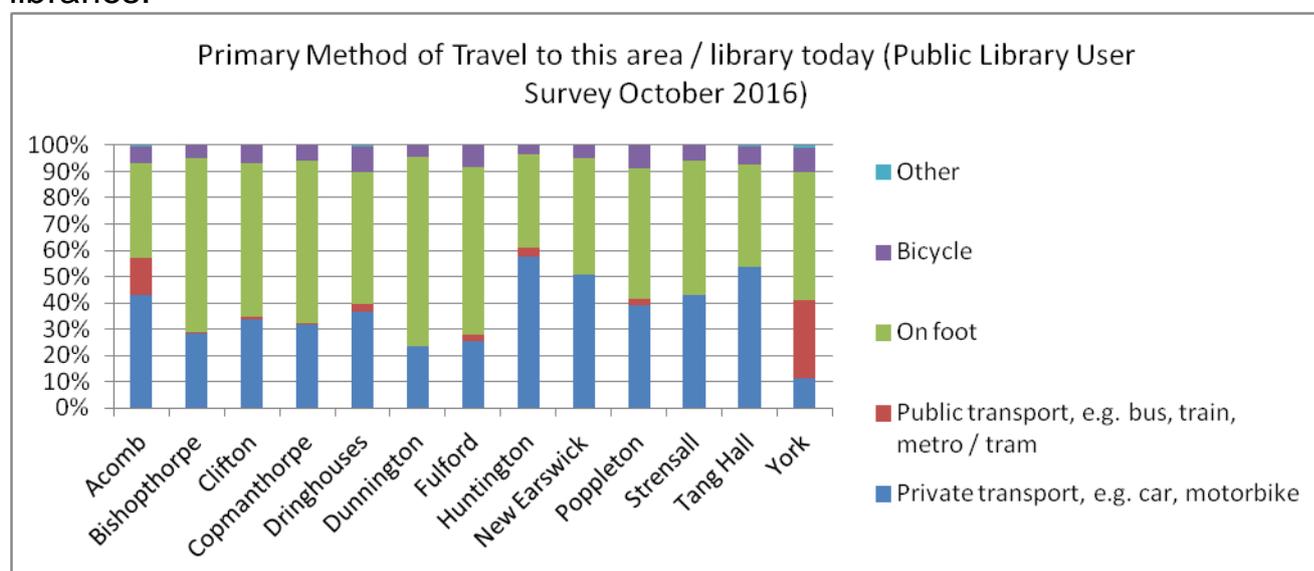
There is longevity of use, with 66% of users having used Explore libraries for more than 3 years, but also a turnover of customers too with 7% of users sampled being on their first visit.

The following table shows how far customers currently travel to get to the libraries. There is a clear trend for people to travel larger distance to get to the Explore Library Learning Centres. They are bigger, they are open longer, they have more services, and they are therefore more likely to be "destination" libraries for people from more than 1km away. Of these Clifton is the one which is attracting the smallest proportion of users from further afield, unsurprisingly, since it is also the smallest of the Explore Library Learning Centres with the shortest opening hours.

<b>Library</b>	<b>Less than 1 KM</b>	<b>between 1 and 2KM</b>	<b>Between 2 and 3KM</b>	<b>Between 3 and 5KM</b>	<b>More than 5 Km</b>
York Explore	15.8%	39.4%	18.9%	16.7%	9.2%
Acomb	42.6%	37.9%	9.0%	8.1%	2.4%
Clifton	59.1%	22.9%	8.2%	7.5%	2.3%
Tang Hall	54.0%	28.7%	8.2%	4.7%	4.4%

Bishopthorpe	69.2%	1.2%	13.5%	15.1%	1.0%
Copmanthorpe	87.9%	5.2%	0.9%	5.1%	1.0%
Dringhouses	70.7%	19.3%	3.0%	5.7%	1.3%
Dunnington	81.1%	4.1%	0.4%	11.1%	3.2%
Fulford	58.1%	24.9%	11.1%	3.7%	2.2%
Huntington	46.5%	33.7%	9.9%	5.4%	4.6%
Haxby	65.3%	21.7%	2.4%	6.6%	4.1%
New Earswick	72.8%	7.4%	12.1%	6.7%	1.0%
Poppleton	74.7%	8.2%	6.7%	3.5%	6.9%
Strensall	73.7%	18.0%	1.1%	4.0%	3.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37.3%</b>	<b>31.7%</b>	<b>13.2%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>

The following graph shows customers' current means of getting to the libraries:



### 4.3 Running costs of libraries

The following table shows indicative costs of individual branches, where costs can reasonably be apportioned out. Some costs such as stock and IT databases are considered full service costs and are not reflected here.

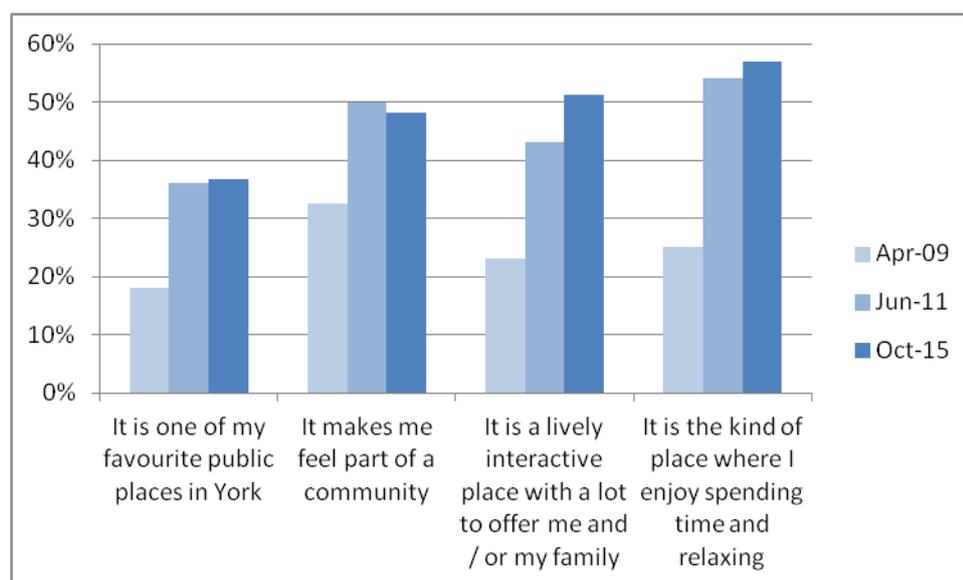
#### Indicative Cost Per Visit

	1718 visits	Cost per visit
<b>Haxby</b>	<b>25,337</b>	<b>£3.44</b>

<b>Mobile</b>	<b>14,091</b>	<b>£3.19</b>
<b>Tang Hall</b>	<b>55,352</b>	<b>£2.03</b>
<b>Clifton</b>	<b>40,212</b>	<b>£1.79</b>
<b>Strensall</b>	<b>13,129</b>	<b>£1.77</b>
<b>York</b>	<b>426,440</b>	<b>£1.42</b>
<b>Acomb</b>	<b>109,785</b>	<b>£1.38</b>
<b>Huntington</b>	<b>25,734</b>	<b>£1.11</b>
<b>Dringhouses</b>	<b>22,924</b>	<b>£1.09</b>
<b>Copmanthorpe</b>	<b>23,164</b>	<b>£1.04</b>
<b>Poppleton</b>	<b>23,137</b>	<b>£0.96</b>
<b>Bishopthorpe</b>	<b>28,397</b>	<b>£0.77</b>
<b>New Earswick</b>	<b>24,544</b>	<b>£0.67</b>
<b>Dunnington</b>	<b>20,404</b>	<b>£0.53</b>
<b>Fulford</b>	<b>25,322</b>	<b>£0.40</b>
<b>Rowntree Park</b>	<b>93,253</b>	<b>£0.22</b>

#### 4.4 Perception of library spaces

The Council's residents' panel, Talkabout, has been used to survey residents about the main library, and this can be used to track perceptions over time:



The Public Library User Survey (PLUS) undertaken October 2016 surveyed 2,354 York library users across all branches. In this survey, the overall satisfaction was found to be 92.4% (very good + good), which was the same as ten years previously, and within 1% of the national

average. The sub-strands within the survey where users reported the lowest satisfaction were “attractiveness of the buildings outside” (70%) and “computer facilities” (71%).

Free text comments indicate that customers value libraries as spaces:

*(Acomb) A lovely friendly place in a sometimes hostile world.*

*(York) I have 2 children and 1 is autistic, it is very hard to find a place he feel accepted and he feels comfortable in this library and it gives my son what he needs.*

*(Copmanthorpe) In moving from Kent to Yorkshire 2 years ago at the age of 90 I found the library a life saver. The welcoming and friendliness made all the difference in helping me settle*

*(York) Wonderful space to feel relaxed at a stressful time.*

*(York) I really love coming to the library . I use it often in my lunch break as a warm, comfortable, free and safe space to relax*

However, in the PLUS survey users also let us know that their enjoyment of the spaces is reduced when they are noisy, smelly, or intimidating, and there were some requests to improve the exteriors of the buildings, so there are mixed feelings about the quality of the current spaces. This reflects the age and condition of many of the community libraries. Condition surveys have shown that there are around £3m of repairing liabilities over the next 20 years. It will be essential to secure new premises that are more fit for purpose and which reduce this significant financial liability on the council.

Libraries offer a large range of activities where people come together, addressing social isolation and bringing people together across the community. In any given week, approximately 18,500 people visit York’s libraries and reading cafés, and 750 specifically come to group events run by Explore such as reading groups, craft groups, coffee mornings, author events, talks, walks, health drop-ins, IT workshops, digital making, children’s activities, storytimes and more.

In the October 2016 PLUS, 37% of customers told us that using the libraries had the positive outcome of “meeting people”, which compares well with the 30% national average on this measure. Verbatim comments from both the survey and some ad hoc comments include:

*(Strensall) As a member of the HM forces the community library is a useful element to integrate into the local population*

*(Copmanthorpe) Hub of the community across the generations.*

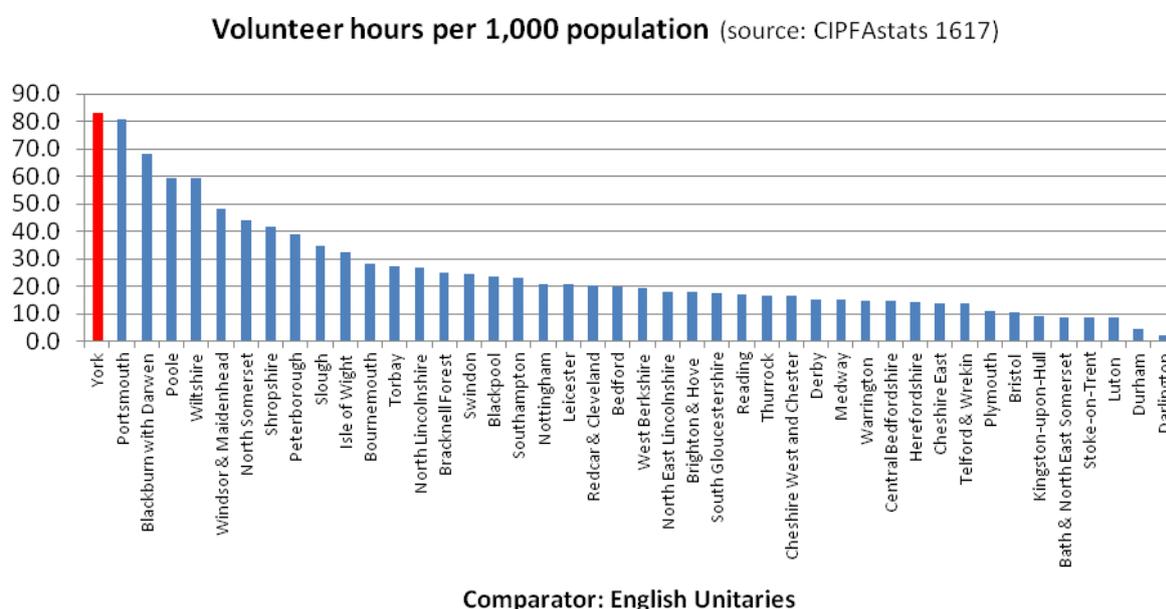
*(Poppleton) The library is a vital element in the life of the community and the only social interactive space for many elderly residents.*

*(New Earswick) I love my local library. I come regularly with my daughter and have made friends here.*

*(Dunnington) We have just moved to the village and my daughter is starting school after the school holidays. Coming to this children's event has enabled her to meet other children and has helped her to start feeling part of the community.*

## 4.5 Community involvement

**Volunteering:** York does not have volunteer-run libraries, but paid staff are supported by volunteers in many ways including storytime support, archives cataloguing, IT support, so our volunteering figures are still high compared to other authorities. The volunteer programme is expanding.



As well as promoting community resilience and enabling the libraries to achieve more, other benefits of the volunteering programme for the volunteers include improvements to self-confidence, employability and social isolation. A volunteer who moved to Poppleton told us she found volunteering invaluable when she first moved to the village and didn't know anybody.

The volunteering programme has varying take up across the branches. Expressing volunteer hours as the average number of volunteers in the building at any time during opening hours makes the figures comparable. The figures below do not include people selecting books for the Home Library Service (HLS), whose volunteers are "freelance", and are volunteering for the HLS rather than for any individual branch.

<b>Volunteers per opening hour 1718</b>	
<b>York</b>	2.1
<b>Dunnington</b>	1.8
<b>Acomb</b>	1.1
<b>Copmanthorpe</b>	0.9
<b>Bishopthorpe</b>	0.8
<b>Fulford</b>	0.8
<b>Poppleton</b>	0.8
<b>Huntington</b>	0.8
<b>Dringhouses</b>	0.8
<b>Tang Hall</b>	0.7
<b>New Earswick</b>	0.5
<b>Clifton</b>	0.5
<b>Strensall</b>	0.4
<b>Haxby</b>	0.2
<b>Mobile</b>	0.1
<b>Homestead Park</b>	0.0
<b>Rowntree Park</b>	0.0

The volunteers programme has been successful but some branches towards the bottom of the chart have had problems with recruitment and retention of volunteers.

### **Friends Groups, Advisory Groups and Community Membership:**

Engaging people in shaping their own library service is fundamental to how Explore works as an organisation. There are Friends groups at:

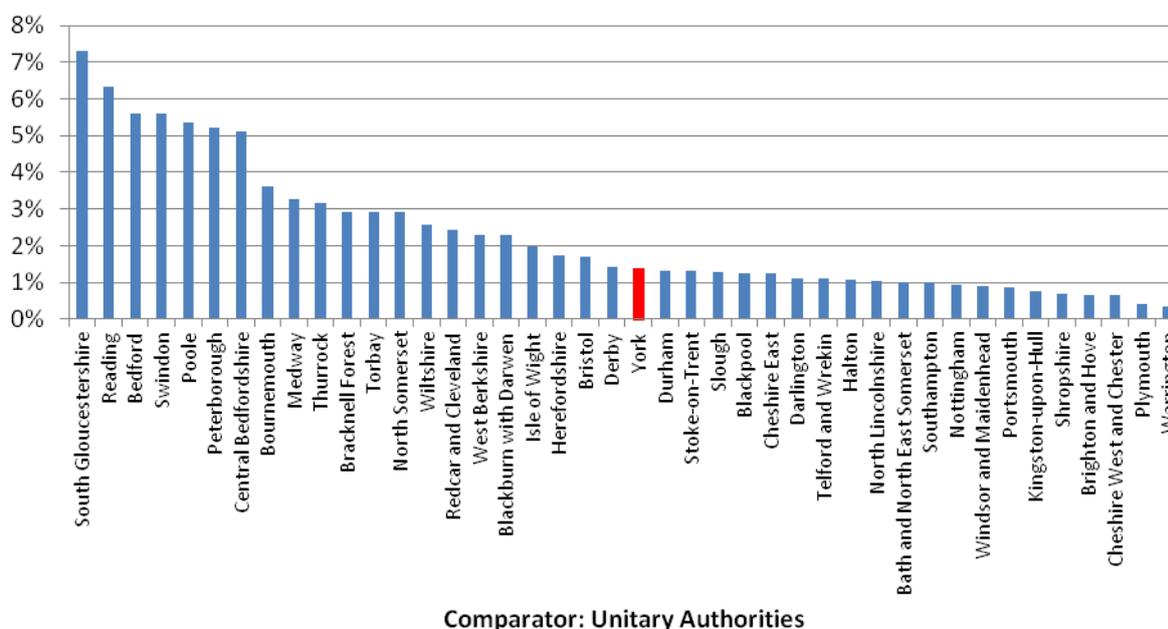
- Bishopthorpe Library
- Copmanthorpe Library
- Dringhouses Library
- Dunnington Library
- Haxby Library
- Huntington Library
- Poppleton Library

These are very hands-on, independent groups, who operate to a common constitution developed in agreement with Explore to support libraries with fund-raising, informing services, and running events. They are open to anybody who is interested in joining and contribute to an active citizenship agenda. There are plans to launch new friends groups at Clifton and Acomb within the next few months.

**Partnership Working:** Explore York currently works with numerous community groups, small charities, public bodies and other relevant partners supporting their initiatives and providing a place where they can communicate with residents. All libraries host drop-in sessions from relevant parties such as the Police, Ward Committees, council consultations and exhibitions, NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group, Citizens Advice etc. Explore also holds copies of documentation to support public consultations, for example on the local plan. From putting up a poster about a local event, to hosting a public meeting, Explore connects organisations with residents (and vice versa) in numerous ways.

**Home library service:** The scale of Explore's housebound service is small compared to its potential customer base. If we use the census figure for 'one-person households where one person has a long term illness or disability' as a proxy measure for the number of potential customers in each authority, the reach is only 1% which is below average but not bottom quartile. Theoretically there ought to be significant room for improvement here, but a project to expand the service in 2016 met with limited success.

**Housebound customers as a proportion of potential customers in population**  
(using 'one person households where one person has a long term illness or disability' as proxy measure for potential customers) (source: CIPFAstats 1516 & census 2011)



**Other excluded groups:** Through work with partner organisations Explore offers services for a number of excluded or harder to reach groups. These include Adults and young people with Learning Disabilities, refugees and migrant workers, LGBT. For example, Explore hosts and facilitates an annual programme for International Day of Disability at York Explore.

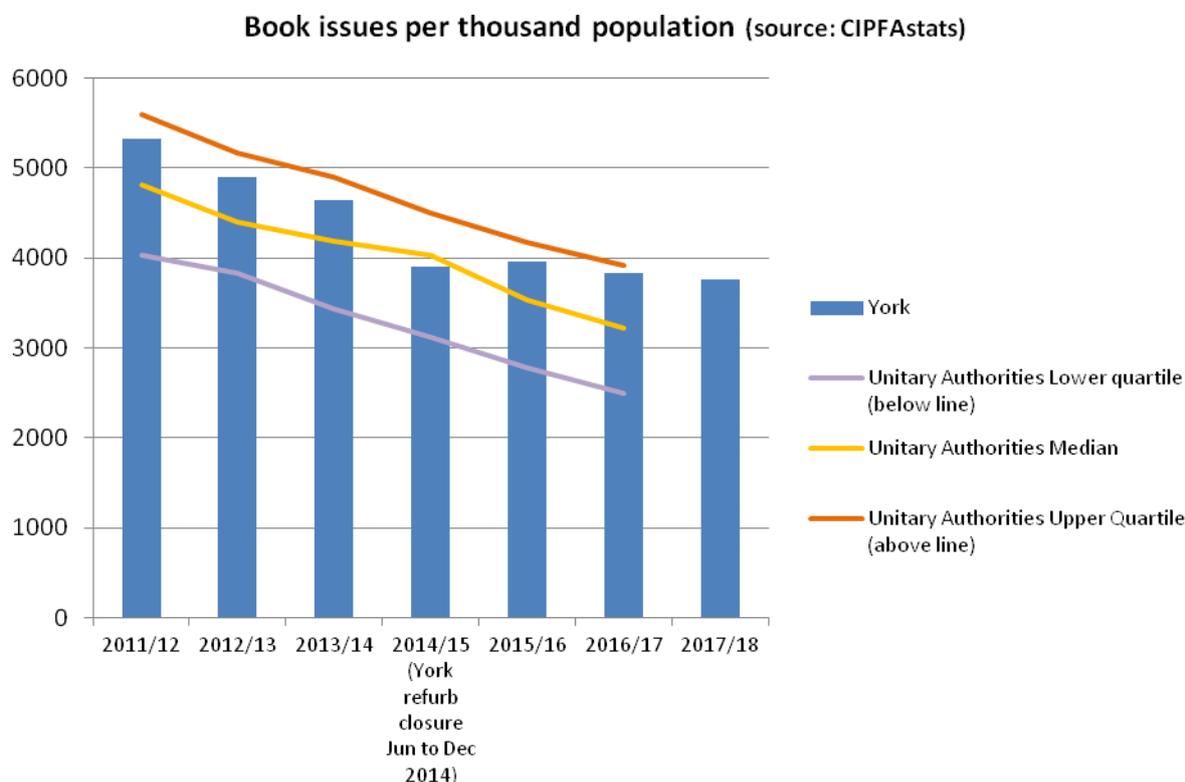
## 4.6 Book issues

Compared to other English unitary authorities Explore's book issues are above average but not upper quartile. Of the various stock categories, only issues of adult non-fiction, e-books and e-audiobooks achieve upper quartile performance.

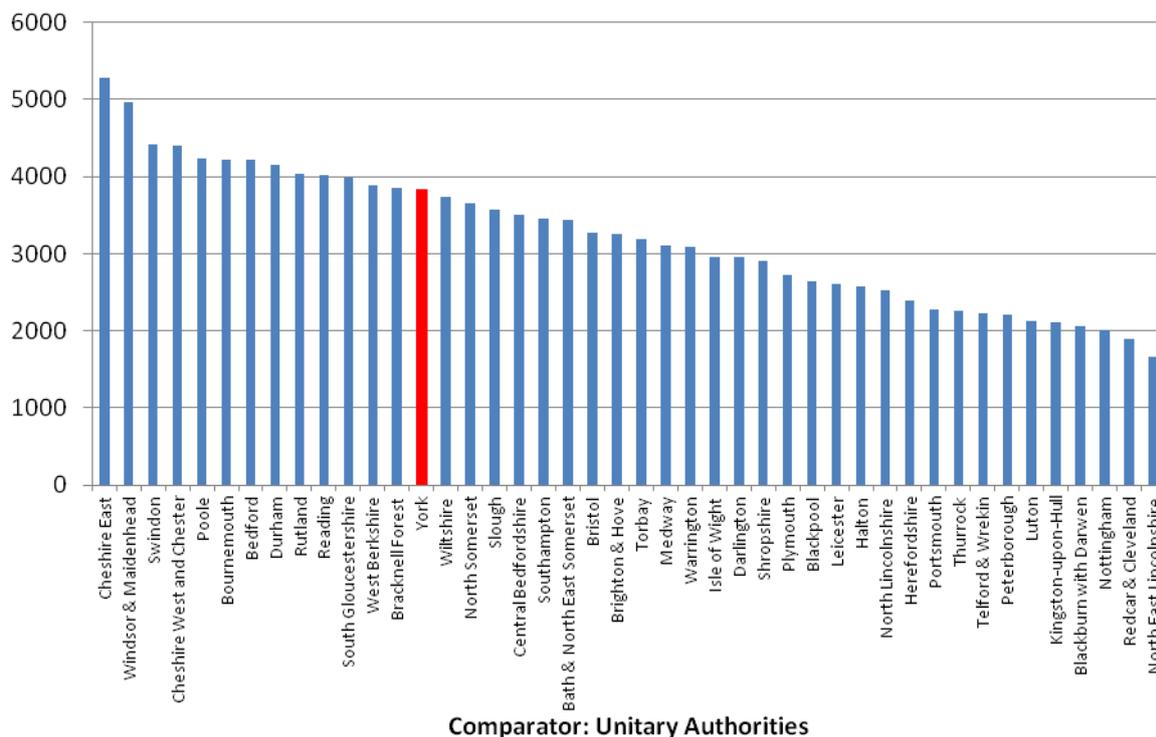
Looking at the trend nationally, it appears that Explore was following the national decline but has recently seen issues stabilise.

The success of the reading cafés does not make a significant contribution to book issues because, although they have lending collections, the books in reading cafés are primarily used for on-site reading.

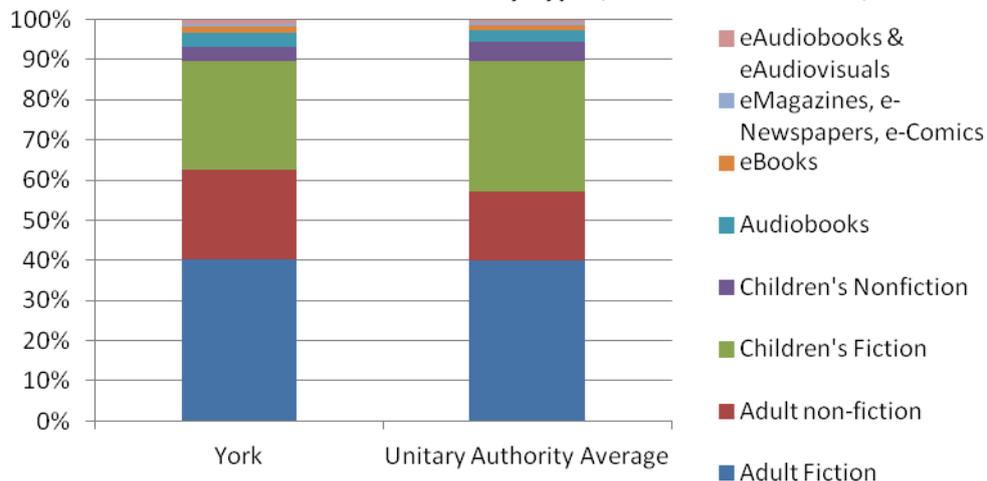
Book issues have been compiled using the CIPFA categories for books, audiobooks, ebooks & emagazines, but not non-book items such as toys, DVDs or CDs. The CIPFA definition of issues includes renewals.



Book Issues per 100 population (source: CIPFAstats 1617)



Breakdown of book issues by type (source CIPFAstats 1617)

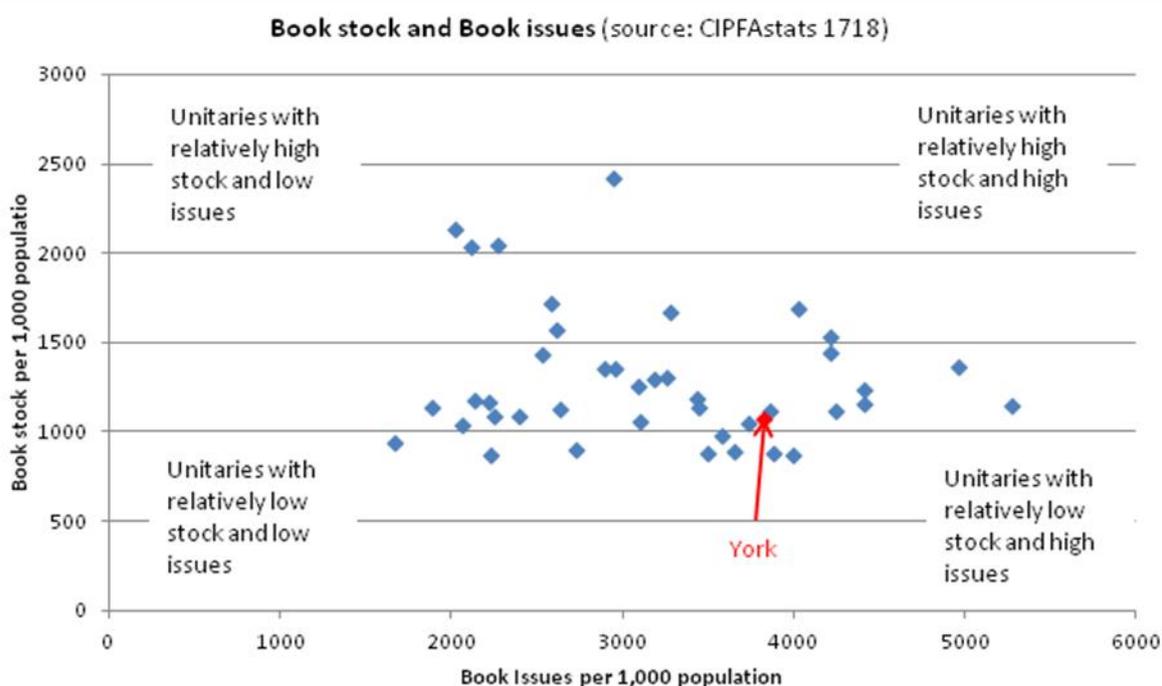


The breakdown of book issues is similar to the national picture, but with adult non-fiction making up more of the issues, and children’s item types making up less of the issues. That said, whilst children’s items make up a smaller proportion of York’s issues than they do at other unitary authorities (31% compared to 37%), this is still high when considered in the context of under 12s making up just 12% of the York population; that is, book issues are skewed towards children’s items at York, but less so than in other authorities.

Explore had 787,585 book issues in 17/18, and 788,861 total issues including non-book items (toys, language courses, CD-ROMs). This is an average of 2,160 issues per day.

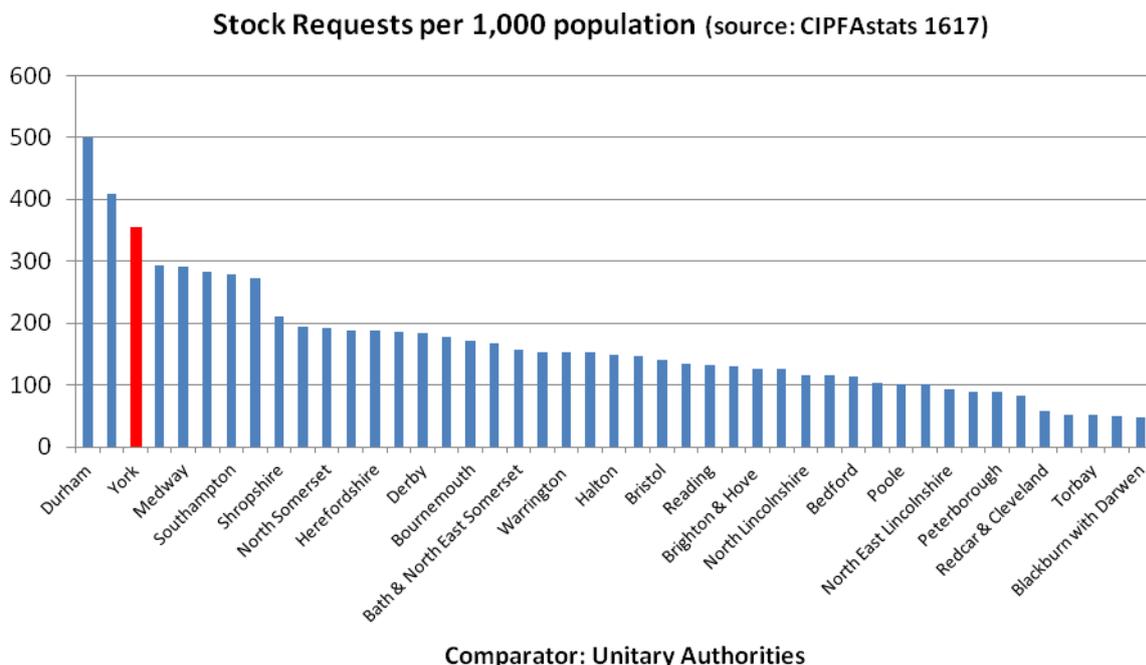
## 4.7 Book stock

The service has a relatively small lending stock collection compared to other unitary authorities, given the population size. The small stock works hard to achieve above average issues. Explore lends books an average of 5.0 times per year, which is well into the hardest working quartile on this stock turn measure (number 42 of 45 authorities). There is no stock reserve at York: all lending stock is on open shelves.



A lot of the comments in the PLUS were about the quality of the bookstock (176 comments). Some were expressions of gratitude and others were more about voicing requests, but either way the volume of comments shows the strength of feeling about the quality of these basic resources. Comments tended to be requests for more of a particular book type or genre, or comments about the arrangement at specific branches, or asking us to rotate the books more frequently.

**Reservations:** Explore offers reservations for customers to choose books from across the catalogue for collection at their local branch at a charge of 25p. Explore receives 1,450 stock reservations per week.



The October 2016 user survey suggested that this service is very well received and exceeds customer expectations; although the survey did not specifically ask about the request service 30 compliments were received. Several people have commented that the reservation system makes their small community library seem “bigger”. Whilst Explore deals with a high number of requests, the supply times are not up to standard. On average, unitary authorities supply 61% of requests within 7 days, and Explore's figure of 48% is well into the bottom quartile on this measure which reflects that there is some work to do prioritise resources to ensure that core stock maintenance tasks are completed.

## 4.8 Engaging readers

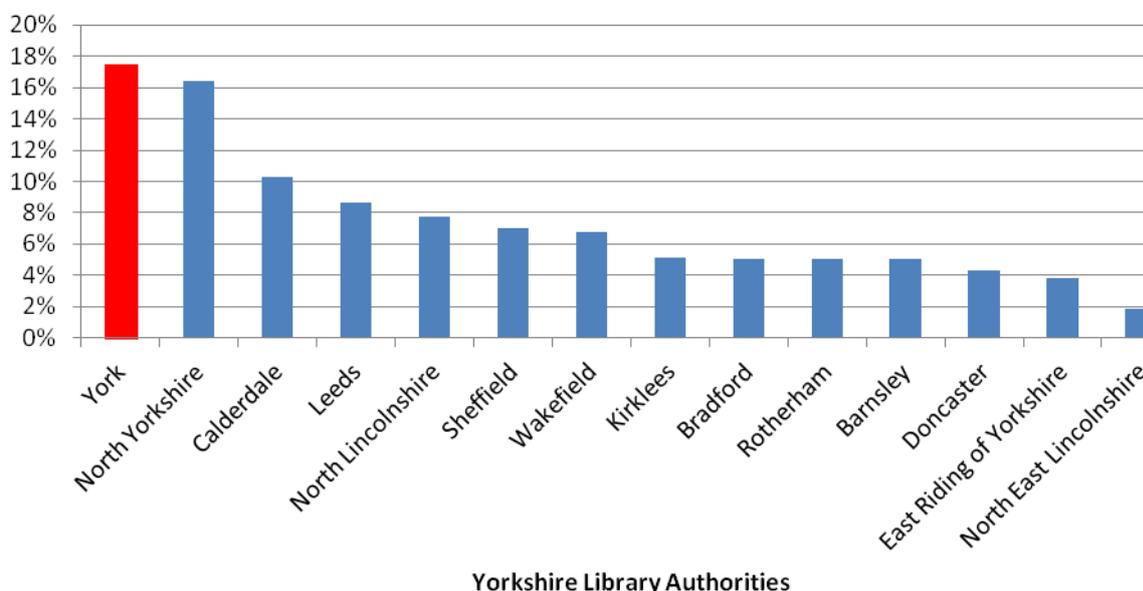
**Reading Groups:** Research has shown that belonging to a reading group helps people to read more, to enjoy reading more, to read more widely and to share their love of books with others. As a result, reading group members have said that they are happier, more confident, have made more friends and feel a part of their local community. There are currently 15 reading groups run by and in the libraries, and Explore supports 125 community-based reading groups through our collection of book sets which are available free for any reading groups to borrow.

**Children's literacy:** Explore contributes to children's literacy through various initiatives such as Bookstart book gifting scheme, story times, children's author events and book challenges, all based around sharing the joy of reading with the next generation. Explore does not run a schools library service but focuses specifically on promoting reading for

pleasure. All libraries offer story and/or rhyme times, and on average 180 under 5s per week attend, gaining benefits in terms of listening & concentrations skills, social skills, vocabulary and hopefully getting started with a love of books.

Explore comes top in the region in the annual Summer Reading Challenge, which is coordinated by The Reading Agency. The Challenge aims to counter the dip in children's literacy which can occur if they stop reading over the summer holidays. Regional figures are shown below, as the Reading Agency does not supply figures for unitary authorities.

**Summer Reading Challenge Participation 2017 as a % of resident children aged 4 to 12** (source: Reading Agency + ONS mid year population estimates 2015)



The Summer Reading Challenge is very well received by teachers, parents and children alike. Teachers tell us that they can tell when children have kept up with their reading over the holiday. Parents report that children who have never been interested in reading get the reading bug when incentivised to read books for fun.

**Author events:** Explore offers a varied programme of reader engagement events across all libraries throughout the year. York Explore in the city centre has the capacity for an audience of 200 and regularly hosts events for high profile authors. Other libraries have varying capacities, but most can host a minimum of 40 which means events can be held away from the city centre, for example Dunnington Reading room adjoining Dunnington library can accommodate an audience of 130 and holds regular events with popular authors. The new

libraries coming on stream at New Earswick and Burnholme will both have access to halls of 200+ capacity. Explore's flagship programme is the Big City Read. Five thousand copies of the same title are given away and people in York are encouraged to read the book at the same time, share it, and participate in a two month programme of events and activities across the city to support their enjoyment and understanding of the book. The Big City Read encourages people to read more widely and more often and to engage with activities in their communities, it supports informal learning and creativity and combats social isolation, all of which contribute to improved health and wellbeing.

**Reading Ahead:** Reading Ahead is a Reading Agency programme which is delivered via public libraries. It is aimed at less confident adult readers and people who have not read for some time, e.g. since leaving school. Reading Ahead challenges people to read 6 books (or poems, magazine articles or web pages) over a period of time and offers incentives as each item is recorded in a reading diary. It has been shown to be a first step back to learning for some people and to encourage people to engage with their local libraries. Explore has run Reading Ahead in partnership with York Learning, Brunswick Nursery and the Blueberry Academy in the last year.

## 4.9 Learning and skills

**Formal Learning:** Explore has a long-standing partnership with York Learning, including working closely on getting joint funding to develop the Explore Centres at Acomb and York into modern learning venues. York Learning offer courses at York Explore, Acomb, Tang Hall and Clifton on a range of subjects from functional skills to art. Number of Learners on York Learning courses in library venues August 2016 to July 2017:

- Acomb – 429
- Clifton – 286
- New Earswick - 12
- Tang Hall – 11
- York Explore – 439

York and Acomb have the largest number of rooms and the most modern facilities for learning. The figures for Tang Hall and Clifton could potentially be higher were additional rooms available. This will be improved when Tang Hall moves into the new Explore Centre at Burnholme in 2018.

In addition to courses run by York Learning, there are also courses run by the WEA and the University's Centre for Lifelong Learning. Explore

runs its own programme of digital skills courses which are covered in section 7.

**Informal Learning:** Libraries support informal learning in a huge range of ways. Informal learning might be learning how to crochet at a craft group; experiencing increased empathy for refugees from a well written novel; learning how to use online shopping at an internet workshop; using the quiet study space; researching the history of your local area; getting the information you need to try writing your own will; being inspired by a storytime to try out some silly accents when reading to your child; or it might be a hundred other things which happen week in week out libraries. Explore is an active member of York's Community Learning Partnership and hosts the York Adult Learner Awards in June every year.

**Job seeking:** The job centre refers residents to Explore if they do not have internet access or internet skills. Explore can help with teaching basic digital skills, or simply through the free internet access which is offered in all libraries. In a March 2015 PC user survey 21% of users said that they were mostly using Explore's PCs for job hunting, and for context there was a total of 93,850 user sessions on library PCs in 17/18. Other than the online skills element, Explore does not currently directly support job-seekers through job clubs, interview skills training, CV writing or other related workshops, although we have supported job-seekers with one-off workshops in the past. We did, for some time, provide weekly IT workshops for job seekers via a partnership with York Learning which has now been discontinued. Having begun providing support for Universal Credit claimants, we are now keen to extend our support for job seekers by providing regular workshops at our Explore centres. In the PLUS survey 10% of customers said that using the library had helped them with job seeking, which was low compared to the national figure of 15%.

**Personal Finance:** Books covering pensions, investments, tax and probate are popular in libraries, but events on this theme for a general audience have not had high take-up at Explore. In 2009, Explore attracted some external funding from Aviva to run a substantial series of financial capability workshops on subjects such as budgeting; however, these were not a big success as we learned that it is very difficult to attract people to workshops on budgeting. York Learning's Family Learning tutors support learners with this subject as part of the functional skills classes in York Explore. Citizens Advice York has run some drop-in sessions in libraries.

In July 2017, in partnership with the DWP and CYC, Explore began offering assisted digital support to new Universal Credit claimants, on a referral only basis.

#### 4.10 Health and wellbeing

York's libraries currently support wellbeing by providing safe spaces where people can enjoy all the mental health benefits of engaging with others, taking an active role in their community, reading and learning. In the PLUS survey 35% of customers said that using the library had helped them with their health & wellbeing, which is very similar to the national figure of 34%.

*(York) This library service has been vital in providing a safe/calm place to recover from depression.*

*(York) I love this library and come every day. I live alone with 'horrible voices' and coming here gives me a feeling of community, fulfilment and satisfaction. I can read the papers, go online and have the sense of being with others even when I'm at my worst and unable to connect as well. The size and design of the building alone imparts a sense of dignity and well being. I love that it is free for everyone not just the rich.*

*(New Earswick) I use the library to borrow audio books for my aunt [...]. She is housebound and her main enjoyment over the last 15 years has been your extensive supply of audiobooks.*

The service provides books on health and wellbeing as well as access to trusted websites to support people faced with conditions or illnesses. People who may not consider themselves to be sporty, sometimes find themselves attracted to the light physical activity offered in libraries such as health walks, volunteering the garden, or playing boccia. During July and August 2017 every library in York hosted a drop in consultation session with the NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group to support their community engagement agenda and allow them to collect feedback on health services in York. There may be scope for York's libraries to contribute more to a public health agenda, perhaps by lending devices or disseminating information, and there is scope for further work with the PCT. Libraries are known as safe neutral spaces, and some people may appreciate accessing health services in a familiar place.

**Books on prescription:** Reading Well Books on Prescription is a Reading Agency programme which is delivered in partnership with public libraries in the UK. Explore delivers Reading Well across all of its libraries aiming to help people manage their own health and wellbeing through reading specific books recommended by health experts. There are 4 themed collections covering mental wellbeing; dementia; young people's mental health and long term health conditions. The books can be borrowed free by anybody without referral, but GPs can also use a prescription to prescribe the books to their patients. It is difficult to determine how widely this happens as people can be given a prescription and simply go into a library and ask for the book. Currently the total number of issues for all 4 collections is 190 per month. Reading Well for Long Term Conditions was launched at the end of July 2017 along with a re-launch of the 3 existing collections. The NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group was very supportive of the scheme and the launch and has enabled Explore to open up a communication channel with York GPs. Explore has also made links in support of Reading Well from the York ME Community, Alzheimer's Society, York Rheumatoid Arthritis Support Group, Dementia Forward Healthwatch York, Yorwellbeing, Age UK York, Home Instead, The Motor Neurone Disease Association, York Carers Centre, York Blind & Partially Sighted Society and 30 Clarence Street. Work will continue to strengthen these links to increase use of the collection.

**Dementia:** Explore has joined the Dementia Awareness Alliance and signed up to the National Dementia Declaration, pledging a commitment to improve the experience of people with dementia who use our service. All staff have taken part in Dementia Friends training. Explore's ambition to be dementia friendly includes holding the Reading Well Dementia collection in every library, and holding a collection of the award-winning Memory Bank DVDs, which are a useful tool for reminiscence. Both facilities can be freely used without referral by any member of the public, but Explore have also approached specific target groups more directly, and have worked with the Dementia Awareness Alliance and Alzheimer's Society. York Explore works in partnership with Alzheimer's Society to run Reading in a Group for people with dementia and their carers. The group meets once a month to share favourite stories and poems, to read aloud and listen to others reading.

## 4.11 Children's services

**Schools:** All libraries have a relationship with their local schools. Classes come on visits to learn about libraries and to swap their books, and library staff go into school assemblies to promote initiatives like the Summer Reading Challenge. The relationship usually works very well, especially with Primary Schools and Explore have had good feedback from teachers about the impact of the partnerships. There is a small minority of schools who do not regularly engage with libraries at the present time, but they are kept up to date on all offers e.g. inviting them to come for a session at the library to collect BookTrust Time to Read packs for their reception children and have a story and look round the library.

Outside school, libraries support children's homework through providing internet access, information and some printing. Explore has run homework clubs in the past but these were withdrawn as part of budget savings.

**Bookstart:** Booktrust's Bookstart scheme delivers free books to babies and toddlers at two stages in their early years, via libraries, through Bookstart Baby Packs (working with Health Visitors) and Treasure Packs (where we work with nurseries and early years settings). The scheme aims to ensure that all babies start out in life with books and reading. Explore offer some high quality activities for parents of babies, particularly story times and baby days where partner organisations are invited in to run sessions in baby signing, baby massage, baby life-saving etc., but these activities are run from within library buildings rather than having a Bookstart Officer engaging hard-to-reach parents out in the community.

**Family activities:** Every week in libraries there are a huge range of activities for children and families including story times and children's reading clubs (at Acomb, Haxby, Tang Hall and York). All libraries are family friendly. During holiday times there are additional activities including author visits, craft events, minecraft, Lego, animation, digital making and more. Even when there is no specific event on, children's spaces in Explore libraries tend to be fun places where children can play with toys and do some drawing, as well as choosing and reading books. Explore aims to ensure that children learn to love libraries and reading at an early age, and have a space which is theirs. The children's offer garnered a lot of compliments in the PLUS survey, for example:

*(Copmanthorpe) The kids crafts have been a real hit with my daughter - who isn't a reader. Its been great to have her*

*surrounded by books - she will now wander around on her own just picking them up.*

*(Clifton) I have used this library from 5 years since my children were born. It has been invaluable for us in providing a place for the children to meet other children and for fostering a love of books and learning from an early age.*

*(Huntington) The library is a very important place for me as a registered childminder, it helps the children to learn, to do homework and explore and learn via books and computers.*

*(Poppleton) Great for our children. They love coming to the library for different books, challenges, activities and from our point of view it supports them educationally and is free! Thank you.*

*(Bishopthorpe) I mainly use the library for Storytime which is fabulous we really love coming and hope it continues indefinitely.*

Although the PLUS surveys only adults a large proportion of comments in 2016 were complimentary of children's services so these appear to be particularly important to users:

*(Copmanthorpe) The kids' crafts have been a real hit with my daughter - who isn't a reader. It's been great to have her surrounded by books - she will now wander around on her own just picking them up.*

*(Clifton) I have used this library from 5 years since my children were born. It has been invaluable for us in providing a place for the children to meet other children and for fostering a love of books and learning from an early age.*

*(Poppleton) Great for our children. They love coming to the library for different books, challenges, activities and from our point of view it supports them educationally and is free! Thank you.*

*(Tang Hall) Really good local service for our 2 children. It has really helped them with reading. They love coming along.*

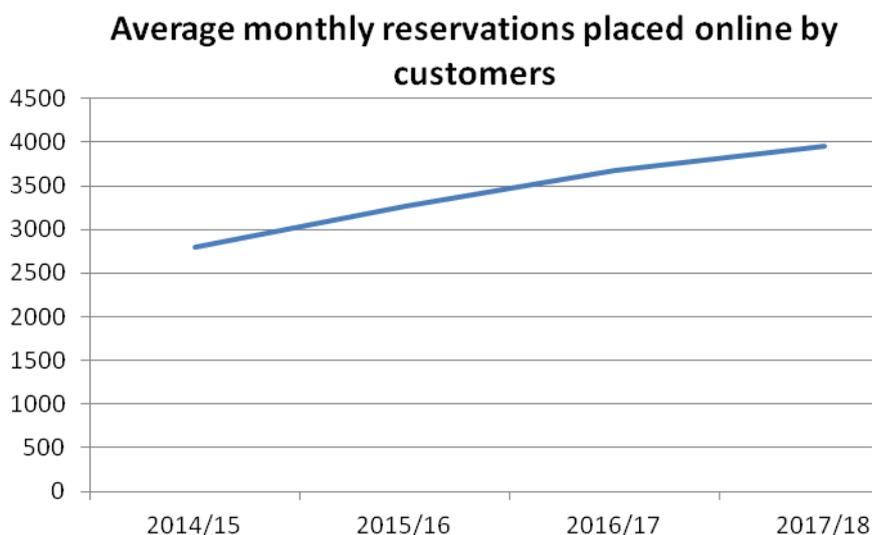
## 4.12 Digital

**Getting online:** Explore offers free sessions and courses to help people get to grips with computers and the internet. The most basic free offer is a one to one session looking at the basic functions of a computer, which is run by staff or volunteers at our larger libraries. Explore also runs a free five week taught course introducing people as a group to the internet which includes topics like internet safety and online health information. Aside from these regular free sessions, there are frequent one-off classes on subjects like cloud storage, twitter, minecraft, the basics of coding and more. Between all the free sessions, there are approximately 40 learners per month. Feedback from attendees has shown that York's free offer makes a big difference to people's lives. We've heard from people who have found our support helpful when starting up new businesses, supporting elderly relatives, building websites and promoting their groups and organisations via social media. One recent learner commented that he wanted to use social media to promote his pub and connect with other local services – he and his wife have attended sessions on Twitter, Facebook, Google Services and the Cloud in order to do this.

Aside from a free offer open to a general audience, Explore also reaches out to specific communities. Some of the Home Library Service volunteers have been given tablet computers via a partnership between Explore and Be Independent (who help people live independently at home by providing emergency care and specialist equipment) and who are actively supporting home library service customers with such aspects of IT as emailing, using the online library resources and Skype. Explore also works in partnership with Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust to support residents in a number of local communities with outreach learning opportunities. We host weekly "Digital Clinics" in New Earswick as well as monthly clinics in Huntington and Dunnington. These areas have large elderly communities and our digital drop-ins have proved very popular for mainly people in their 70s and 80s who need support with technology and online resources.

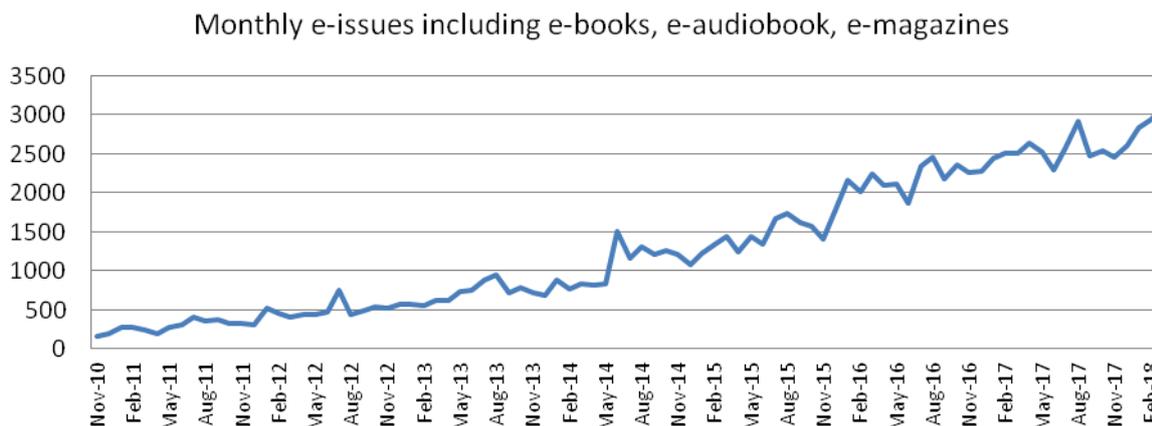
In the PLUS survey 28% of customers said that using the library had helped them with getting online, which was low compared to the national figure of 34%.

**Online Services:** Explore's online services are well-received, and tend to exceed expectations, but there is room for improvement. The library catalogue website offers residents the ability to place book reservations, renew their books, change their password, submit comments or suggest a book for purchase. The number of customers using these services is increasing, as below. However the website is still not optimised for mobile devices and people cannot update their own contact details or pay their fines online, although these developments should be in place by the end of 2018.



Explore has a principle of digital by default where possible and we see that a high proportion of routine library transactions are now self-service as opposed to staff-mediated: renewals 80%, and book issues 88%. This allows Explore to focus resources more efficiently and spend more time with customers in detailed enquiries. In addition to this, Explore is currently trialling self-payment and release of public printing and this is proving very popular.

There is a steady increase in customers downloading e-books, e-audiobook and e-magazines, which they can do from their homes. Explore was an early adopter of ebooks in 2010, and the service has been very well received, going down particularly well among customers who find it difficult or unappealing to visit a branch. Nationally the publishing industry has seen the appetite for purchasing e-books plateau or even fall compared to print books, but the increasing demand has not yet abated at York Libraries. That said, e-issues are only 5% of total issues at this stage.



As well as e-books, Explore also offers online access to reference resources such as encyclopaedias and academic journals. These resources have not been as successful as the e-books, and usage is fairly costly when expressed in terms of cost per use. Genealogy resources like Ancestry and Find My Past have a definite audience, but other resources can be harder to market. There is a challenge to win people over to using quality subscription resources from the library as opposed to their free counterparts (e.g. OED compared to dictionary.com or Britannica over wikipedia).

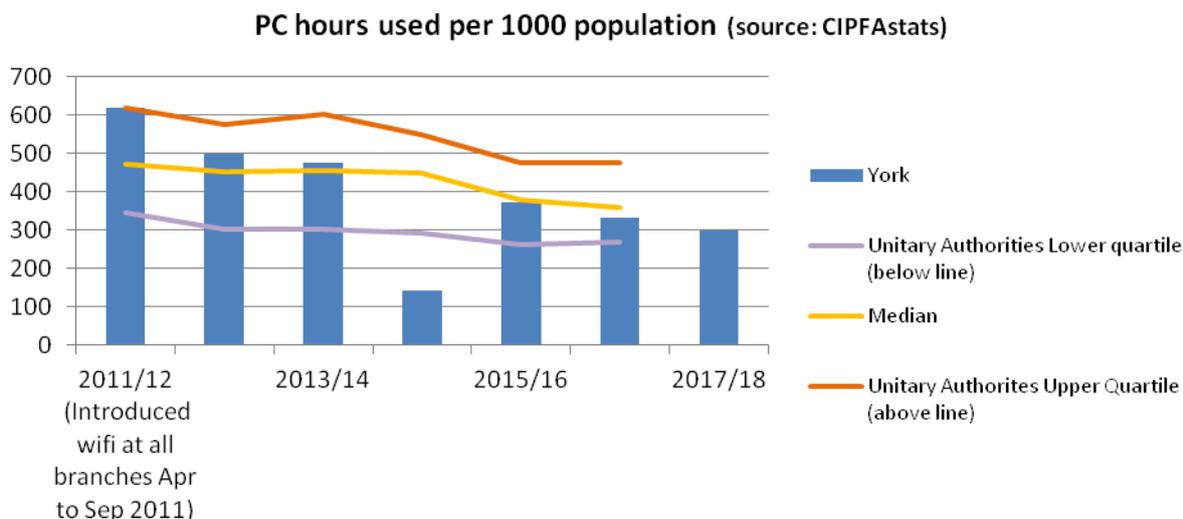
Explore uses social media regularly, and has 18,000 followers across all channels, but no more than 3,500 on any one account, which is low compared to other York organisations with dedicated social media staff, for example City of York Council has 37k on twitter alone.

Explore's main website is modern, having had a complete re-design in 2016, but with investment it could do more, and Explore is looking for ways to fund the development of an e-commerce platform which would enable national and international sales of archive images.

**Public Computers & Wifi:** PCs are available at all York's libraries, but usage is declining over time over and above the pace of the national decline. From an upper quartile position six years ago, the measure 'PC hours used per 1,000 population' has fallen dramatically. Compared to other unitary authorities, Explore's performance on this measure is below average. However, the extent to which this constitutes "poor" performance is debatable as it may largely reflect the preference for wifi, of which Explore was an early adopter in 2011.

The number of PCs has not been reduced in spite of falling usage, and PCs at a lot of branches are now vacant more often than they are in use. In 05/06 Explore's PCs were used 75% of their available time but, by 17/18, this figure has dropped to 37%. Regardless, there are some occasions when all PCs are in use, and some customers do still ask for

additional PCs. Explore has been reluctant to remove PCs because customer feedback has shown that they meet some significant needs.



The introduction of the wifi offer, which some customers use in preference to PCs, clearly accounts for a significant part of the decline in PC use. In a recent one-day sample, 11% of public network traffic was via wifi as opposed to the PCs.

Whilst the increase in home computing and the availability of wifi in Explore's branches are clearly related to the relatively low PC usage, customer feedback would suggest that quality also has an impact. Only 71% of users rated the computers "very good" or "good" in the October 2016 user satisfaction survey, which was one of the lowest areas of satisfaction in the survey, and lower than the national average of 77%. The oldest of the PCs are from 2007 so approaching 10 years old, and are due to be refreshed by the end of the current contract period.

## 5.0 The Consultation

### 5.1 Methodology

The council undertook a major consultation to inform this needs assessment which ran between 9 November 2017 and 14 February 2018. The approach taken was designed to ensure that the broadest reach was achieved, with a mixture of approaches taken supported by a communications plan using all forms of media.

**Online survey:** This was managed by the council's business intelligence unit and published on the consultation pages of the council's website. A proposed vision, together with background information, were

made available to view before completing the online survey. Paper copies of the survey were made available at all libraries.

**Non-user survey:** This was managed by QA Research and was delivered through an on-street survey. Various locations were used including the city centre and other shopping areas like Acomb, seeking individuals who had not used the library service in the past 12 months. If someone had used the service, they were directed to the online survey. This survey was conducted between 22 January and 3 February 2018.

**Stakeholder and focus group workshops:** These were independently facilitated by Andrews Associates. The brief for the stakeholder workshops was to facilitate discussion around each library against the vision. The focus group workshops were aimed at reaching a particular audience, such as young people who were unlikely to respond to a survey. A total of 20 sessions were facilitated, 16 around a local library and 4 focused around young people and adult learner groups, running from 12 December 2017 to 14 February 2018.

**Specialist interest groups:** Special interest groups were written to seeking feedback on the vision and offering an opportunity to meet face to face to discuss any specific needs.

**Council's budget consultation 2018/19:** This was managed by the council's business intelligence unit and published on the consultation pages of the council's website from 13 October to 15 December 2017. The survey included questions about future capital investment and future revenue funding for library services.

The following table shows the level of response.

<b>Consultation Method</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Online survey	1,329 (736 online, 593 paper)
Non-user survey	125
Stakeholder & focus groups	200
Specialist interest groups	2 groups
Budget consultation	828
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,484</b>

## 5.2 Key messages

The detailed feedback from each of the consultation strands can be found in Annex 1. This section provides a summary of the key messages.

There was strong support for the council's proposed headline vision of a library service providing *'Centres of Learning and Opportunity for All'*.

Particularly important to respondents was that libraries are *'staffed by well trained staff with excellent customer focus'*. This was highlighted in the stakeholder sessions and in the online survey where 96% of responses rated it as important.

Next most important to respondents were, *'Accessible spaces: information will be easy to obtain, reading encouraged, research easy and learning natural'*, *'Open at times that reflect the needs of the community including late night and weekend opening where required'*, and *'Clearly signed, easy to see in and encouraging people to come in'*.

Even the two elements of the draft vision that were least endorsed were rated as important by 25% of respondents: *'Flexible spaces which can be used for other purposes when not being used for library services'* and *'Creative spaces that challenge your imagination and encourage the sharing of knowledge and ideas'*.

Furthermore, where respondents were asked in the survey about money saving ideas, they frequently commented on the importance of using library spaces to generate income.

**Future priorities for services:** With regard to people's top priorities for the different types of library, the top answers were the same for all libraries: Borrowing books, reading and studying space, local information, events, computers. There was just one exception which was that archives and local history was also a priority for York Explore.

Non-users indicated that the top three things that would encourage them to come to a library in the future was: a reading café on site, better information about services, and more events and activities.

**Future network of libraries:** The key finding here is that almost everyone from the stakeholder and focus group sessions saw the local library providing an important community hub. There were strong aspirations to enhance this hub role through improvements to library buildings and facilities. The perceived role of the community hub varied depending on local needs, but in general there was strong recognition of

the key role that the local library provides in a broader context of social inclusion, providing a neutral place to meet people and to engage in activities including relating to learning and literacy.

**Co-location:** There was support for a vision of moving away from stand-alone buildings and recognition of the need for partnerships to create services co-located with other community amenities.

With respect to location, over 50% of respondents in the online survey said they would be most likely to combine a visit to the library with a trip to the shops, the post office or the bank suggesting that prominent high street locations remain the most suitable for libraries.

**Young People:** Three focus groups with young people found that young people like having flexible space for sessions such as lego or story-time and that this works best at the larger libraries such as Acomb and York which have rooms off the main library space. Cafés were also highlighted as important enabling young people to meet up with friends. In terms of what they want to see in the future, especially as teenagers, the importance of technology and things they don't have at home such as 3D printers was stressed. A desire was expressed to see more clubs such as coding clubs.

Three cross-cutting themes emerged particularly strongly across the consultation strands that can help to strengthen the vision for future services:

- **Community involvement** – There was strong support for a 'bottom up' approach where the local communities have a voice and involvement in libraries through the Friends Groups or volunteering. The online survey also highlighted that 1 in 4 respondents would volunteer to carry out basic tasks, like shelving, whilst 1 in 5 said they would join a friends group, help make local decisions and help out with events.
- **Marketing and promotion** – There were numerous comments about a lack of awareness of the services and activities provided by libraries and the need for more marketing activity. The non-user survey also highlighted the need to know more about what is on offer as a solution to encourage people to use libraries in the future. (This was the second highest answer).
- **Reading Cafés** – 40% of responses from the non-user survey felt that a reading café would be the single most important element in encouraging them to visit a library. The stakeholder groups and online survey also confirmed the importance of cafés in libraries,

especially for the parents of the younger users, in generating library usage / growth and facilitating social interaction.

## 6.0 A New Vision

This assessment of need has attempted to draw out the key strategic needs in York that will shape the future of library services in the city over the next contract period. It points up the contribution that library services can make particularly in:

- Creating resilient communities
- Making high quality spaces available to communities
- Promoting inclusion
- Making a significant contribution to learning and skills
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Providing high quality information, advice and guidance
- Delivering a cultural offer

It has painted a picture of the current service that is generally successful, providing a wide range of innovative services and good value for money.

It has drawn out the key messages that the public have told us through consultation about what they wish to see in the future.

All this material will need to be reflected in the specification for the next contract period. It suggests:

- Building on success
- Continuing to develop library services to address the strategic needs outlined above
- Continuing to improve and develop the network of buildings to address the current issues and meet future needs and expectations

In order to encapsulate this and to provide a foundation for the new approach the following vision statement is set out:

We propose to build on the success of our libraries by continuing to place learning at the heart of everything we do, re-imagining our libraries as *Centres of Learning and Opportunity for All*. We believe that our libraries should continue to be stocked with a broad range of books and materials that promote reading and literacy and to support people with

the information they need in their everyday lives. Increasingly they will be:

- Fit-for-purpose, contemporary spaces meeting the needs of everyone
- Fully accessible: information will be easy to obtain, reading encouraged, research easy and learning natural
- Outward looking, linking with the community and drawing people in to foster a sense of place
- Open at times that reflect the needs of the community including late night and weekend opening where required
- Shaped by local need, promoting community involvement and enabling local people to take action in their area
- Transparent and visible from the outside, clearly signed and encouraging people to come in
- Staffed by well trained staff with excellent customer focus

And they will:

- Maximise use of the building assets through partnership working and innovative programming
- Proactively promote their activities and services making sure that the whole community is aware of the offer

They will also provide state-of-the-art learning spaces that have:

- The latest digital technologies
- Flexible spaces for formal and informal learning
- Study space and creative spaces
- A range of learning programmes
- Digital inclusion programmes to get people online for free

### **What network of library buildings should we have?**

There should be a range of libraries to meet the needs of different users. Some libraries will be larger, offering all services, and some smaller, designed to meet more local needs. Reading cafés should be incorporated into all libraries wherever possible. There will be five types of library:

**York Explore:** this should remain the flagship facility where all services are available including the Archive & Local History Centre.

**Explore Library Learning Centres:** Experience shows that the bigger libraries are popular (the biggest 4 currently account for 64% of library visits). People will travel further to use them because they have more stock, are open longer and offer more services. There is a case to build on this by creating three Explore Library Learning Centres across the city providing:

- A broad range of library, learning and information facilities
- Space for adult learning courses and encounters
- Reading café
- Cultural and community arts activities
- Space for multiple community use / hires
- Access to archive and local history resources

The Explore Library Learning Centres would be located in the areas of greater need: at the Burnholme Centre (currently under construction), Acomb Explore (which has been so successful that it would now benefit from enlargement) and in the Clifton area (potentially a replacement for / upgrade of the current Clifton library).

**Explore Gateways:** Offered in a variety of venues, preferably with café facilities, these libraries should be co-located with other community activities where possible, with local communities invited to be involved in their operation. They will remain a key part of the statutory service and the library provider will continue to ensure that they are staffed and stocked with books, materials and information.

**Virtual Libraries:** A 24/7 online service including ebooks and emagazines, other online resources and virtual spaces for people to share ideas e.g. online reading groups.

**Reading Cafés:** These are a different type of library service encouraging the joy of reading especially for those who may feel uncomfortable in a more traditional library.

## Annex

Annex A – Consultation report for Meetings with Stakeholders

Annex B – Online Library Survey Findings Report

Annex C – On-street Library Survey Findings Report

Annex D – Budget Consultation 2018/19 – Library Services Report