

Library Outreach Services: Supplementary consultation information

What are 'Library Outreach Services'?

The Library Services area proposals and questionnaire refer to 'Library Outreach Services'. This term describes a wide range of library activities, events and public internet access services which could be delivered outside of current library buildings in future, depending on the results of this consultation and the final decision made.

It is our aim for all library buildings to remain open across Somerset - some however will need community support in order to do so. If community partnerships cannot be arranged and the current library building cannot remain open, then Library Outreach Services would deliver our statutory library service in some communities instead. Usually (but not in all cases) we would deliver Library Outreach Services alongside a mobile library service.

Many Library Outreach Services would be delivered through partnerships with other organisations, other council services and through volunteer or community groups. Events and activities could also be delivered as a 'pop-up' service in local communities, requiring no fixed equipment.

This document sets out some of the different kinds of Library Outreach Services that could be provided in communities, together with a table showing where different outreach services could be provided in future.

We stress that no decision has been made and won't be made until all the results of this consultation have been fully analysed and reviewed. Until a final decision has been made, these are just proposals, and we welcome your feedback.

What activities would be delivered via Library Outreach Services?

Public Computer Access provision

Currently 'People's Network' public access computers are provided in all library buildings. In future, if library buildings were to close, we would look to provide public access computers outside of current library buildings in some areas. We would only be able to do this in areas where there was a high need for public computer access, and where usage was currently high – as proposed in the table below.

The County Council would work with local partners or other Council services to install and maintain Public Access Computers in other locations. Members of the public will still be able to access this computer via their library membership card (as they can now). This service **would not** be staffed by library staff, and printing and scanning facilities may not be available in all communities.

Reading and other activities for the under 5s

The library service provides a range of activities to support and promote literacy helping to support under 5s to prepare for school.

The Bookstart programme - where children's books are given to parents or carers - is already provided as an outreach service through Health Visitors. This will continue whatever the outcome of this consultation.

Where proposed in the table below, 'Baby Boogie' and 'Rhyme Time / Toddler Time' activities would be provided in different buildings such as community venues or in other County Council buildings, if a library building was to close. These activities may be provided by library staff, volunteers or partner organisations.

Health, Wellbeing and Reading activities for adults

There are a wide range of events and activities for adults taking place in libraries around the County. These include 'Knit and Knatter' groups (regular, sociable activities based around knitting or sewing); 'Feel better with a book' groups (where people come together to listen to stories or poems), and a wide variety of other special interest and self-help activities.

Where proposed in the table below, activities like these would be provided in different buildings such as community venues or in other County Council buildings, if the current library building was to close.

The library service also supports over 300 reading groups across the County. This service would continue to be delivered through other Council or community venues if a current library building was to close, or via the mobile library service.

Digital inclusion activities for adults

The library service provides support to adults who find it more difficult to access or use the internet. This support would continue through Library Outreach Services in some locations (those proposed in the table below). There are many different types of activity, but broadly digital inclusion support is provided in two ways. Firstly, people who do not have tablets, smart phones or computers can try out these technologies in libraries – for example, through one of our regular UK Online sessions, or through a one-off, 'pop up' event. Secondly, people who have their own device, but who want to learn more about how to use it, would be supported through regular, informal groups, helping them to get online and to develop skills.

'Pop up' technology events for older children and adults

The library service has a range of technology and equipment (including Raspberry Pis, Microbits, a 3D printer, and much more) which is made available to groups or individuals to support learning, creativity and to inspire young people to learn more about the digital world. This technology would be showcased through 'pop up' events as part of a Library Outreach Service in the communities where this is

proposed in the table below. We would endeavour to work with partners to support more regular technology events (such as Code Clubs) outside of library buildings, but this would not form part of the statutory service.

Small Book Collections

In addition to the range of activities set out above, we would endeavour to maintain small book collections as an outreach service in areas where library buildings have closed, and where access to alternative venues is more difficult. This could, however, only be provided where suitable community space could be found, and **would not form part of the statutory service**. We do not currently have any firm proposals of where small book collections might be situated, and so these are not included in the table below.

What Library Outreach Services are proposed for my community?

The mix of activities and services provided as Library Outreach Services will vary in each community, depending on the level of need in different areas. For example, where there is a high need for public access computers, we would provide this service; where digital exclusion rates are highest, we would provide digital inclusion activities for adults.

The following information is provided as a guide only, and is the minimum level of service that we consider is required to meet our statutory duties in certain communities (where Library Outreach Services are proposed as an alternative means of delivering library services, and only if a decision is taken to close the library building).

Libraries located in the town centres of Taunton, Frome, Bridgwater and Yeovil are proposed to remain open, with no change to their existing library service. These towns are listed overleaf, however, as we are proposing to deliver additional Library Outreach Services in surrounding areas where they are needed most.

Proposed location and type of Library Outreach Services

The table overleaf sets out the proposed location and type of Library Outreach Services. It does not include the proposed location of small book collections, because we do not currently have any firm proposals of where small book collections might be situated, and because small book collections would be provided where possible, and not as part of the statutory service.

Table: proposed locations and types of Library Outreach Service

Community	Public Computer Access provision	Reading and other activities for the under 5s	Health, Wellbeing and Reading activities for adults	Digital inclusion activities for adults	'Pop up' technology events for older children and adults
Bridgwater *		✓			✓
Crewkerne #	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Frome *		✓			✓
Highbridge #		✓			✓
Ilminster #		✓	✓		
Martock #		✓	✓	✓	✓
Shepton Mallet ##	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Street #	✓	✓	✓		
Taunton ** (inc. Priorswood)		✓			✓
Watchet #		✓	✓		
Wellington #	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yeovil *** (inc. Sunningdale)		✓			✓

Notes on the table:

Library Outreach Services would only be provided as a statutory service in these communities if the library building closed.

Library Outreach Services would only be provided as a statutory service in Shepton Mallet if there was no library building in Shepton Mallet.

* We are proposing to deliver additional outreach services in the areas of Bridgwater and Frome that need them the most, whilst retaining the library building in the centre of these towns.

** Outreach services in Taunton are proposed to be delivered in the Priorswood area if the current library building in Priorswood closed, and also in the Halcon area of Taunton. We are proposing to retain the library building in the centre of Taunton.

*** Outreach services in Yeovil are proposed to be delivered in the area around Sunningdale library if the current Sunningdale library building closed, and also in the Westfields area of Yeovil. We are proposing to retain the library building in the centre of Yeovil.

As well as retaining library buildings in the centre of Taunton, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Frome, we are proposing to retain library buildings in the communities of Wincanton, Wells, Chard, Langport, Glastonbury, Burnham-on-Sea, Williton and Minehead. The

services described above would be delivered primarily through the library buildings in these communities, and not as Library Outreach Services.

We would endeavour to deliver Library Outreach Services in other communities in Somerset. However, we are not proposing that the delivery of Library Outreach Services would form part of the statutory library service in the communities of Bruton, Castle Cary, Milborne Port, Somerton, South Petherton, Cheddar, North Petherton, Nether Stowey, Bishops Lydeard, Wiveliscombe, Porlock or Dulverton. If a decision was taken to close library buildings in these communities, statutory library services would be provided through a Mobile Library only. This is because the level of need in these communities is not as high as in the communities where we are proposing to provide outreach services.

How will Library Outreach Services be governed?

Providing events and activities through Library Outreach Services would be governed by a policy. This new policy (to be drafted by Somerset County Council after the consultation has ended and a final decision on the way forward has been made), would set out the approach to this aspect of our statutory library service, in a similar way to the current policy governing our mobile library provision.

The policy would ensure that events and activities were regularly reviewed, and provided in areas where there was a reasonable demand and need. If services or events were not being used, we would reduce them; if services were over-subscribed, we would look to increase them. We would also review services if the underlying need changed (for example, if digital inclusion training was no longer required).

The policy would also set out the criteria that would be used if Somerset County Council was to stop providing events and activities or public access computers as part of Library Outreach Services in a community, for example if the service was not being used by many people.