

## Denbighshire Narrative 2020-21

### 1. Case Studies

The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Up to six case studies may be provided (indicative length: 500 words each), two of which can be digital. However, the digital case studies are not compulsory.

Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Yes - obtained / No – not obtained

Case Study 1:

#### **Order and Collect: a new library offer for the pandemic**

In June 2020 we created and launched a new Order and Collect service to enable customers to once again borrow books and audiobooks from their local library. Customers could choose their own books via the online catalogue, or they could ask staff to choose books for them, placing their order via an online form or by phoning their local library. The vast majority of customer chose to use the phone – as for many people forced to stay home to shield, it was an opportunity to have a chat and reduce their isolation. When the books were ready for collection we contacted the customer to arrange an appointment to come and collect from the library door, or we arranged a home delivery for people unable to come to the library.

Feedback on the service has been overwhelmingly positive and it has made a significant impact on how people were able to cope with lockdown, shielding and a general anxiety about going back into community facilities:

*“I just wanted to say how wonderful it is that even though it is closed the library is doing an Order and Collect service. I’ve been so alone, my family live abroad and all I have are books. It’s wonderful to see the friendly faces of the staff, but most of all the books. It’s like having friends returning from a long trip, and the gift is the stories locked up inside them. The library is an essential service for a lonely man living in uncertain times.”*

*“I just wanted to extend a big thanks of gratitude to the Library and their wonderful Click and Collect service, as someone who was self-isolating this has been a wonderful highlight to very long days. It’s lovely that the Library is just a phone call away and they’ll try their very best to get the books I would like to read and even throw in a book I would never think about reading - big thank you to whomever chooses the random crime book for me, you’ve never let me down yet.”*

One feature of Order and Collect which was particularly popular was staff choosing books for readers, or including an additional 'surprise' book in a bag of books chosen by the customer. It opened up many people's reading experience, introducing them to new authors and genres, and added value to the core service offer:

"I don't know who is choosing the children's books, but they are doing a better job than I do. We were rolling on the floor laughing at the last ones."

"Thank you to Rhyl Library for continuing its service to the locals, and thank you to the person who has been picking my books out for me, always great picks"

"You have been so kind and considerate in ensuring I can still access the facilities of the library, despite not knowing the technique of on-line ordering books! As you can see, I'm still sailing on the Ark! Your recent choice of six books for me was amazing. Despite being a library member for almost 60 years (Denbigh then Ruthin) I hadn't read these!"

"Thank you for this unexpected extra book. I really enjoyed it and it has introduced me to a new author. Nice idea!"

For one customer, the Order and Collect service, and the re-opening of inter-authority lending later in the year meant that she was able to continue in her freelance work even when there was no physical access to their local library:

*I would like to thank Denbighshire County Council Library for its excellent service since March 2020 throughout the coronavirus pandemic. During this time, I have been able to reserve and obtain books from various libraries across North Wales for both my work and for pleasure. I have been able to collect them in a safe and efficient way at Ruthin Library.*

*During this period, I have needed books covering a wide range of subjects for research use in my freelance work. This has included delivering lectures online via zoom for tourist guides who operate tours in Wales. In addition, I have used books to assist in the production of virtual tours (for all ages) and educational resources for primary children for a national organisation which is being put on a website. The virtual tours work will help to raise the profile of the Denbighshire area and encourage people to visit the area.*

*It would have been much harder to carry out this work without access to the wealth of books I was able to borrow from the Library Service. Many thanks for all your hard work in carrying out this service in challenging conditions.*

Setting up a new service within three weeks, whilst also having to work in a new way to ensure staff safety, demonstrates the flexibility of libraries and staff, and their commitment to providing core services to local people in challenging times. The value of having access to books and reading for so many people should not be underestimated.

*"Being able to access so many books has helped to keep us sane. Thank you. Diolch"*

## Case Study 2:

### **Skills for the new future: Estyn Allan**

With the increased importance of digital provision during the pandemic, and the recognition that digital would be more central to the future library offer across Wales, Denbighshire's Principal Librarian devised and lead on the delivery of a major collaborative training project for Welsh library staff.

When the Welsh Government's Cultural Recovery Fund was announced in September, SCL Cymru agreed that a collaborative bid would enable all 22 authorities to benefit from its impact, and it was agreed that digital skills development was critical for the short and long-term resilience of services, to retain audience for services and to attract new audiences, particular those for whom digital is their preferred sphere.

Called Estyn Allan ('Reaching Out'), the project aimed to develop frontline library staff skills in creating and producing digital library activities such as storytimes, reading groups, author events, and social media promotion. Each authority nominated 1 or 2 members of staff to become their key trainees to participate in the full programme, and other staff were also able to join some training activities.

The project also wanted to ensure that all the learning impact stayed within the library sector in Wales, so the project co-ordinator was seconded from Swansea Libraries, and the project steering group was made up of SCL members. The training programme was created and delivered within a 3-month window thanks to the energy and commitment of the co-ordinator, trainees and steering group, aided by the Jan-March 2021 lockdown as staff were able to focus on their training while libraries were closed.

Training included reader development in a digital context, video creation and editing, podcasting, and getting the best out of social media, and was provided by experts in their field with provision in both languages. Trainees were also given funding to purchase filming and recording equipment and software for their services.

One aim of the project was to create a peer support network amongst the trainees which was facilitated through a closed Facebook group, small groups work on activities and the co-ordinator's support and encouragement.

By the end of March 2021, 33 key trainees had benefitted from the full programme of 26 training sessions, and a further 48 staff had attended some training activity with a total attendance of 534 attendances. Many trainees had started to put their new skills, knowledge and confidence into practice before the end of the training programme, and the CRF funding enabled the project to buy in the time of a wide range of authors from Wales to participate in digital events and interviews. This work will continue into 21-22 when the content created will be published on digital platforms such as the Welsh Libraries website, authorities' own social media accounts and the Summer Reading Challenge website.

All the trainees across Wales were asked about the impact of the programme on them.

When asked to rate their confidence to participate in online activities as part of their role, the average score rose by 10% from 6.92 (out of 10) before the training to 7.6 afterwards. Rating their digital and technical skills, in particular their confidence to create online content such as video and images, the average score rose by 34% from 5.75 to 7.73.

Denbighshire nominated two staff as key trainees and we asked them what impact the Estyn Allan training project has had on them:

*“Being part of the Estyn Allan project has been an excellent experience which has benefitted both my personal and professional development. Through participation in online sessions with industry professionals I have been able to gain specialist skills and knowledge relating to the use of digital equipment for marketing and content creation. As a result, my digital confidence levels have increased significantly and I have applied this new learning through the creation of new online media content for Denbighshire Libraries as well as working to enhance the social media presence of the same. Working as part of the Estyn Allan Team has opened up new links between Denbighshire Libraries and others across Wales and allowed the sharing of ideas and resources on a scale which would otherwise not have been possible. Going forward, I hope to share my learning with my colleagues in Denbighshire and strive towards further enhancing my digital skills. “*

*“As someone who has a long-established interest in digital media and its use in the library service, I am very thankful to have had the opportunity to take part in the Estyn Allan project. I felt that the courses were engaging in building an understanding on how we can utilise digital media to enhance the library experience. In particular, the video editing training helped my understanding in how to use filming equipment and editing software confidently to create new and exciting content for the library. I have been fortunate enough to contribute to the Welsh libraries podcast, #BywDarllen, that was created as a result of the project. The podcast shines a spotlight on Welsh literature through author interviews and discussions with library staff members across Wales. This podcast has been a brilliant chance to demonstrate the research, editing, and marketing skills developed from the course. In doing so, we have also been able to establish a new communicative medium for the library to engage with our existing audience, but also reach out to a new audience. I am thankful to have had these opportunities to use my skills in digital media, and will look to use those skills to help staff members to develop their own understanding of the digital library experience. “*

Case Study 3:

### **Opening up the world of digital reading**

The growth in the use of digital library resources (ebooks, eaudiobooks, and digital magazines and newspapers) has been seen for several years – but it was greatly accelerated by the lockdown in March 2020 as people sought access to reading material when library building had to close.

Total downloads of digital material increased by 166% in 20-21, with Borrowbox (ebooks and eaudiobooks in English and Welsh) increased by 94%, and e-zines by 55%. This was supported by Welsh Government’s investment in additional content in Welsh Libraries’

Borrowbox offer, and we also purchased some additional stock to meet demand for heavily-requested titles. We enabled people to join online and access the resources without having to come into the library.

For one customer living with ME, using Borrowbox has made a positive impact on her life as she has access to downloadable eaudiobooks, and can also support her son's reading development:

*"This is the most fantastic App! I have M.E. No longer able to read but I can listen to these books. So many choices of books too! Really simple to use, syncs well across tablet and phone and it's free with library. There's also super easy option to reserve a book and it will email when u can add it! I've listened to the book my son was reading at school so we could talk about it. Thank you for making a bookworm happy again!! :-)"*

With libraries unable to offer access to printed newspapers due to closure and safety concerns once re-opened, we decided to invest in a new online newspapers offer, Press Reader which gives daily access to over 7000 titles from across the world. This has built up a steady use over the year, with 37,671 issue opens.

We went to talk to one particular customer about the impact it has had on his life whilst shielding and beyond:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mKH6YhTD0Ls>

*"A great innovation for me. I can just get up in the morning, make a coffee, turn on and read whatever newspaper I like".*

## Case Study 4:

### **Bookstart switch to digital**

From the week of the lockdown when library buildings had to close, Denbighshire Bookstart moved its regular rhymetime activity online. The Bookstart team, working from home, produced a live bilingual Rhymetime on Facebook every week (average views 664), and recorded and published online rhyme and story videos (average views 1079). They were also invited to record a video for Booktrust Cymru's website to encourage new parents to share songs, rhymes and books with their babies.

The live sessions enabled families to continue to engage with the team and the service – sending in requests for birthday greetings and favourite rhymes each week, creating a direct personal engagement with each session. Sessions are bilingual and make use of Makaton signing so that children and families can develop their Welsh and signing skills at the same time. The sessions brought a sense of normality and routine to many families. Hundreds of families are watching both live and on catch-up later.

The team also produced 50 online rhyme and story videos in Welsh and English which have been viewed a total of 37,559 times. The videos have followed a variety of themes and included rhymes from the lambing shed, songs on a real red tractor, sing-a-long songs with the guitar and quiet bedtime songs. They also include a series of guidance videos for new parents under the brand Siarad Babi/Baby Talk. Videos are either bilingual or in Welsh or English, and make extensive use of Makaton signing. The team were invited to record a bilingual video for Booktrust Cymru's website to encourage new parents to share songs, rhymes and books with their babies, and presented at a BookTrust Cymru webinar for early years professionals to share good practice in reaching new families during the pandemic.

The back catalogue of videos on the Denbighshire Bookstart YouTube channel continues to be used by a wide range of families and early years providers and schools. Since its launch in July 2015 the content has been viewed 1,034,579 times.

The following stories from the team demonstrate the impact of attending rhymetimes and how families have embraced our virtual offer in order to keep 'attending' as they recognise the benefits to their children.

#### **Story 1**

We first met mum B at the Mother & Baby support unit at Rhyl. She was young with a baby girl N, had lost her own mum and her dad wasn't able to support her. We introduced her to Bookstart and the importance of sharing stories and songs and this would help to give her baby the best start. Later she joined us with her baby and her friends for rhymetime in the library.

Time passed, and our next meeting with B's toddler was again in the library but this time with a foster parent. Mum was having regular contact and eventually N was returned and they moved to another town. Mum and N regularly attended rhymetime in the library and both really enjoyed the sessions and always borrowed books. Sadly, things changed and N was living with the same foster parents on a long term placement.

Recently Mum contacted us through our Facebook page, she has a new baby boy and wanted to let us know and to enquire about any baby groups in view of the current restrictions. We suggested she go to the library and collect a Bookstart pack and join the baby as a library member and to join us on Facebook for our online baby sessions.

We were delighted that she had contacted us – she had valued our support and input at difficult times when she was a young mum. She is at a different stage in her life now and has the confidence to contact us, and clearly wants to give her baby boy the best start.

## **Story 2**

N used to attend Bookstart rhymetimes over 10 years ago with her then younger daughter. She enjoyed sessions so much that on many occasions several other family members would come along with her on a family outing. N has now become a Grandmother and wanted her grandson O to have the same experiences at 'Book Club' as they call us, as she knows it makes a difference. Baby O's mum was very young, reserved and unsure when we first met her. She really didn't 'get it'.

N, Mum S and Baby O became regulars at baby rhymetime, in fact most weeks attending 2 sessions. Over time Mum S started to relax and grow in confidence and we were delighted when she started joining in with the songs. Every week they would borrow library books and it was very obvious that mum was reading and singing to baby O at home. They became one of the best collectors of Book Crawl certificates. During storytime baby O would concentrate and stay focused for the whole story. He did not take his eyes off us! Although N and mum S enjoyed coming to the library together, Mum S would now happily speak to new families at sessions and ask for Baby O's favourite songs. On World Book Day she was so excited that she'd found a T shirt of his favourite book 'That's not my Car'.

As we are currently unable to offer rhymetimes in the library, Mum S has still been engaging, from the first 'Live' session tuning in and commenting on Facebook weekly to say how much O is enjoying the sessions and all the videos that we post.

## **Story 3**

J has been a friend of Bookstart since she was toddler. J is now nearly 15yrs old and has a severe learning and physical disability. From an early age J loved our songs and rhymes and despite having no speech would clearly display joy when we sang her favourite songs.

Over the years her family have kept in touch and would keep us updated with her progress. We would see her on visits the local special school whilst doing outreach sessions and on library visits with the school. We would always have to sing her favourite Green frog song. When we created our YouTube channel it became a big hit with J and her family - they would tell us J loved watching our videos.

During the current pandemic, J's family tell us that our videos and weekly 'live' online sessions have made a real difference to them and to J. They frequently send in requests and ask for a 'shout out'. Sadly, J has not returned to school in September and her family tell us that more than ever our sessions are extra special and give J something to look forward to each week.

## **Summary**

The aim was to keep as much activity going for families as possible during the pandemic when normal rhymetime activity and contact in libraries has not been allowed. The staff team had to learn new skills very quickly and have shown great flexibility, creativity and commitment in switching their provision to virtual at a time of great personal stress.

The team's work was recognised in 'Making a Difference: Libraries, Lockdown and Looking Ahead', a report by Carnegie Trust UK into UK public library services exploring their role supporting individuals and communities during lockdown and the barriers they faced during this time. It also explores their role in supporting the recovery.

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/making-a-difference-libraries-lockdown-and-looking-ahead/> (p10)

Many comments from parents on social media show that the activity during the pandemic has been greatly valued and enjoyed by families, has contributed to children's development, and has helped parents during this challenging period. In the words of one parent:

"Thank you for helping bring a bit of normality to our little ones' lives"

Case study 5:

### **Memory bags to support people living with dementia**

Following the launch of the Reading Well for Dementia Scheme in 2019 we decided that we would like to expand the services that we can offer to people living locally with dementia and their carers, and we looked at what other libraries around the UK had to offer.

We were particularly interested in reminiscence collections and produced a prototype Memory Bag, which we shared at an event to launch Dementia Aware Denbighshire. The bag and the concept were of great interest to practitioners and carers and led to us forming a partnership with Denbighshire Community Arts and Life Story Network to secure funding from the Dementia Aware Community Led Grant Programme 2019-20 and Welsh Church Act funding.

As part of the development of the bags we attended some sessions with potential users, for example the Rhuddlan Music Memories Group and a community arts group in Corwen, to gather feedback on what items would engage people. We decided on 8 themes, basing them around the 'Pictures to Share' books, which are designed specifically for people living with dementia and are part of the Reading Well scheme.

The themes are – At The Seaside; Childhood Days; In the Garden; Memories of Music; Shopping; World of Work; Travelling; Leisure Time. The bilingual 'Hen Wlad fy Nhadau' book in the same series was included in every bag. Using the feedback we had received we purchased a variety of contents, selecting items that stimulate the senses and promote reminiscence and discussion.

The bags also include a Creative Wellbeing Activity Toolkit, designed by local artist Jude Wood on behalf of Denbighshire Community Arts, that contains ideas for creative activities for people living with dementia, their families and carers.

The Memory bags are borrowed in the same way as any library books and are ideally suited for use in one to one situations by family members and carers, or by practitioners in small groups.

A local specialist Admiral Nurse working in St Kentigern's Hospice posted this tweet and went on to explain how she had used our Memory Bags and was inspired to create her own memory boxes:



*“At the Hospice we are supporting people with dementia for occasional respite or symptom control and end of life care as it is a life limiting illness. We had a selection of books as well as memory bags. We used them to support 2 people who we had in for respite. The transport one was of particular interest to one person. Staff sat down in the lounge area and introduced different pieces whether a book, postcard etc they encouraged the person to talk about driving lessons, tests, type of car they had. What would have been there dream car. There was also a*

*magazine in that bag too I think with different shop fronts and fashions which enabled conversation. It had quite a calming effect and engaged the person for about 20-30 minutes.*

*The books especially the Welsh one was really good for the other person and they sang and read the words with us explaining the meaning.*

*Knowing what a valuable resource they were I have applied for a grant to have a few similar boxes here which has been supported by the Rhyl Rotarians.”*

Following a press release we also received enquiries from further afield, for example, an Occupational Therapy student studying at Cardiff University asked for advice on how we went about the project, and someone from a health care library in Devon also got in touch with a similar query.

We are currently hoping that we can expand the number of memory bags we have available, and exploring other options, such as a jigsaw library, and when restrictions ease we are hoping to have reminiscence groups meeting in our libraries.

## Case study 6:

### **Proactive Calls**

Within two weeks of the first lockdown, Denbighshire County Council set up a proactive calling service to support residents who were required to shield.

With library buildings closed, the team of library staff were the first cohort of staff to be redeployed to provide the new service. This was also a recognition of their skills set in talking with people to discover their needs and then to identify the most appropriate place to refer them for further support. They are also highly experienced in engaging with people – and for many shielding residents the calls were their first opportunity to have a chat with someone outside their household.

Library managers helped to set up the new service and were involved with adapting the national script to meet local circumstances, creating a database to record residents' details and responses, setting up staff to work from home or closed library buildings, organising call teams and supporting more complex cases.

The frontline staff used the script to steer their conversations with residents, skilfully adapting their language and tone to the call recipient's situation.

The Library team also worked in close collaboration with colleagues from other services and the third sector to keep updated about the support in each community in the county.

The vast majority of residents were delighted to be contacted by the council, and even if they had no immediate support needs, they were grateful that they had been contacted and enjoyed the chat. For some residents, the calls were a lifeline and enabled them to receive support that they had not realised was available to them – these included referrals for the WG food parcels, support from the Red Cross for emergency food and medicines, and access to home delivery services from pharmacies and local shops and volunteers. If residents wanted, staff would call them back every two weeks to keep in touch and support any change of circumstances.

Some of the calls were distressing for staff to handle as they tried to support residents with complex needs, and there were a small number of hostile responses at a time of great stress and anxiety for everyone.

As library services were permitted to restart in June 2021, the library staff team returned to their normal roles, with shielding staff remaining working from home on the proactive calls. When the firebreak lockdown was announced in October, an additional round of calls was made to the residents who had been supported previously, to check in on their welfare and refer as needed. During the Jan-March 2021 lockdown, library staff again made contact with residents on the database – to check in on their welfare, to have a chat, and also to make them aware of the range of services libraries were able to offer them at the time.

Many residents sent unsolicited feedback about the Proactive Calls which demonstrated the value they placed on receiving the calls, and the positive impact it had on them, both practically and emotionally:

*Mr Evans wanted to say that he is highly delighted with the phone calls that [library staff] had done during the shielding period. Said a very polite lady, informative and made follow up calls on a regular basis to him.*

*"Very appreciative of the wellbeing phone call received on 28/10. It has restored my faith in the local authority and is a lovely gesture"*

*"Just wanted to say how wonderful it is to be called up during the second Lockdown to see if I'm ok for shopping, it was lovely to speak to a young man earlier today from a Library I think, he did say his name but I've forgotten it! What a caring Council we have.*

*I called [resident] as part of the proactive calling for shielding customers. She told me how grateful she was for my call and for the previous calls she'd had, "No one usually bothers with us so it was a really nice gesture for you to ring me, I really appreciate it". She also gave praise to the library staff for always getting a bag of books for her.*

The contribution of the Denbighshire Libraries team to the local Covid response was recognised in the Carnegie UK Trust's report *Making a Difference: Libraries, Lockdown and Looking Ahead* (p20)

<https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/making-a-difference-libraries-lockdown-and-looking-ahead/>

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## **Contribution to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals**

**Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals (indicative length: 500 - 1,000 words).**

### **Better Mental Health**

Reading in itself is beneficial to mental health and the local library within the community provides the access to a vast range of reading experiences for all tastes, in physical and digital formats. During pandemic year we created a new Order and Collect service to give access to physical books, broadened our home delivery service, increased our range of digital resources and benefitted from Welsh Government's additional investment in eresources for Borrowbox. We also launched a new digital newspapers offer. Two of our regular reading groups switched to online meetings.

The Reading Well for Children scheme was launched in Wales in October 2020, providing access to a collection of books selected by experts and children, to help children feel better and to deal with their emotions and things that happen around them. Our ability to roll out the programme has been delayed due to the pandemic but plans have been made for a local steering group in 21-22. Access to the full range of Reading Well scheme books was provided via the Order and Collect service.

We launched a new collection of Memory Bags created by librarians to support people living with dementia and their carers, funded via the Dementia Aware Denbighshire programme (see Case Study 5).

The project funded by the BCUHB Mental Health Strategy transformation funds to embed Reading Well into Primary care practice, working in partnership with Conwy Libraries and Public Health Wales, was suspended in lockdown, and was reshaped to reach potential beneficiaries as services started to re-open.

### **Skills and Employability**

Most of our usual activity in this area had to be suspended during pandemic year as Covid rules prevented indoor group activity and saw libraries offering a reduced range of services. Access to public PCs was reintroduced in August 2020 enabling job seekers to use the facilities. Volunteering in libraries was also not possible due to social distancing rules, and the usual learning opportunities provided by partner agencies was also suspended.

### **Digital**

We were able to resume our offer of free physical access to computers, broadband and Wi-Fi internet connection, and access to scanning and printing in August 2020 (by appointment) but providing help and support to use a computer, to get online and access websites, and to develop basic digital skills, was severely limited due to social distancing rules.

Libraries are a key partner in Denbighshire County Council's Digital Exclusion project which aims to identify how the council can reduce digital exclusion. In 20-21 we focussed on staff skills and planning for implementing a Digital Transformation project funded by the Cultural Recovery Fund in early 21-22.

Our range of resources was extended (see above) and library customers new to the services were helped and supported by staff to learn new skills to access and enjoy the resources. We enabled people to join online and access the resources without having to come into the library and 857 people joined the library online during the year.

Library staff have increased their digital skills during pandemic year. All staff were set up to be able to work from home or at safe workstations in closed library building during the first lockdown in order to provide the Proactive Calls service (see Case Study 6). Staff were also encouraged to complete a range of e-learning modules and digital skills online modules during the year. Two members of staff were key trainees in the Estyn Allan project (see Case Study 2) and developed advanced skills in creating digital online library activities. This collaborative project across all Wales' public library services was led on behalf of SCL Cymru by Denbighshire's Principal Librarian.

### **Early Years & Literacy**

Our Bookstart activity switched to online in the first week of lockdown and continued to provide a highly valued digital service to families all year (see Case Study 4). These activities help to develop young children's language, learning and social skills and have a significant impact on parental mental health, and on parents' skills and confidence as their child's first educators. They introduce many families to the Welsh language, and many families go on to choose Welsh-medium childcare or education as a result of their early experiences in the library. The gifting of Bookstart bags was switched to collection from the library when Health Visiting clinics and home visits were suspended.

The Summer Reading Challenge was offered in 2020 via our Order and Collect service. For the first time children could also participate online, and a brand new Welsh language website was launched by the Reading Agency with WG funding. The challenge is a key activity in supporting the development of children's reading skills and enthusiasm.

### **Support for wellbeing and social care**

After a short period off the road in the first lockdown, the Home Library Service resumed in June 2020 and provides a personalised service to individuals who cannot access their local library due to disability, illness or caring responsibilities. The monthly home visits are eagerly awaited, providing not only a range of books to read but social interaction and a gateway to other council services for people who are socially isolated.

Regular in-person library activities with partners to support community wellbeing had to be suspended this year. We continued to provide a digital assistance service for online Blue Badge applications.

## **Cymraeg**

We continue to be a key provider of access to Welsh language books and resources within local communities. The online Bookstart/Dechrau Da provision continued to introduce many families to Welsh, two Welsh language reading groups were hosted digitally, and the range of Welsh resources was extended.

## **Community Resilience**

Denbighshire's vision for libraries is that they are the beating hearts of their communities, where local people can access services in their local community; a shared, trusted and welcoming facility with friendly knowledgeable staff.

Even during period of closure of our building we continued to provide highly valued services to our communities. The Proactive Call Service staffed by the library team, supported people who were shielding (see Case Study 6), we introduced an order and collect service and expanded our home delivery offer to ensure people still had access to physical books, and extended and improved our digital resources offer.

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## 2. Future Direction

**Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).**

Libraries are key to the delivery Denbighshire's Corporate Plan, and the Library Strategy 2019-22 sets a clear direction for the service. Activities and developments which will contribute include:

- Further developing the Health and Wellbeing offer and strategic collaboration with Public Health Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board services to embed libraries' contribution to health strategic plans outcomes, particularly mental health, with a focus on the rollout of the Reading Well for Children scheme into the health and education sector.
- A focus on staff's digital skills to support library users, improve digital inclusion and deliver a range of digital services.
- A review of the van delivery service to better fit current business needs and identify savings.
- Exploring the potential of new digital technology and enhancing the service's digital offer including a tendering process for a PC management system.
- Deliver the Solo Digital Spaces project at all libraries to create private spaces for people to participate in online meetings and interviews, working with partners to reduce digital exclusion.
- Further developing library facilities as flexible, adaptable and safe spaces to facilitate the delivery of 1:1 and small group support services and to enable people to engage socially with each other

At the time of writing (July 2021), all libraries have re-opened offering open access browsing and borrowing, order and collect, and by appointment access to computers and printing, some study space, and One Stop Shop services and the Home Library Service is delivering. Some 1-1 and small group activity was recently re-introduced but social distancing rules mean that numbers are very restricted.

Ongoing budget pressures within the service, and council-wide will also impact on future development.