

## Annual Business Plan 2025/26



## Contents

Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive .....	2
1. Who we are.....	4
1.3 Our Vision .....	4
1.4 Our Mission .....	4
1.5 Our Values .....	4
1.6 Our Network and Services .....	5
1.7 Our Staff Customer Promise .....	6
2. The Planning Context .....	7
3. Our Focus – Priorities and Strategic Goals.....	8
4. 2025/26 Strategic Goals, Annual Targets and Objectives .....	9
5. Measuring Results .....	16
6. Financing Our Services .....	19
7. Governance and Delivering the Business Plan.....	20
Appendix 1: Libraries NI Board Members.....	21
Appendix 2: Libraries NI - Organisation Structure .....	22

## Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive



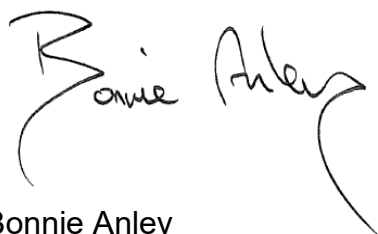
We are pleased to present the Annual Business Plan 2025/26 which sets out the direction of travel for Libraries NI for the next twelve months and outlines our ambitions for delivering the public library service in Northern Ireland. The Annual Business Plan is set within the overarching framework of our new draft Corporate Plan which sets out the focus, priorities and corporate goals for the period 2025 – 30. Both the Business and Corporate Plans are closely linked and aligned to wider government priorities, and in particular the Programme for Government, the Department for Communities strategies, business plans and priorities. In this way libraries aim to make a lasting and sustainable contribution to improving the societal wellbeing of individuals and communities in Northern Ireland.

This plan has been developed against a continuing challenging public sector budget position in Northern Ireland. The interim funding allocation from the Department for Communities will enable Libraries NI to deliver an effective public library service. We will continue to work with the Department over the course of the year with a view to taking advantage of opportunities that may arise for further allocations, particularly to boost book stock spend.

We will work hard to ensure that libraries continue to deliver on priority agendas that make a real difference to the lives of people and communities. The network of libraries remains strategically important and we believe that this importance will strengthen as we continue to work collaboratively with organisations across government departments, public bodies and the voluntary and private sectors. Despite the challenges, Libraries NI must continue to play its part in wider society, supporting the delivery of services, providing local access points and helping customers to connect with information and services that contribute to social and economic wellbeing. All of this is only made possible by our dedicated and professional staff who are committed to delivering high standards of service and providing help and support to assist people using libraries, no matter what their background or circumstances.

Libraries are trusted service providers in the heart of communities supporting people from different backgrounds and demographics, encouraging a love of reading and providing opportunities for people to learn and to connect with information, technology and services. As we work to meet the challenges of the next twelve months, we will continue to play our part in societal and economic recovery, working closely with officials from the Department for Communities, other government departments and partners, to deliver for people whilst building upon our unique position as a trusted and valued community resource.

Our staff are the driving force behind our achievements and successes and we would like to thank everyone for their ongoing commitment to delivering the public library service. Working together we can ensure the public library service continues to be delivered to support people, local communities and wider society in Northern Ireland.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bonnie Anley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bonnie" written in a smaller, more compact script than the last name "Anley".

Bonnie Anley  
Chairperson

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim O'Hagan". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and the last name "O'Hagan" clearly visible in a flowing script.

Jim O'Hagan  
Chief Executive

## 1. Who we are

- 1.1 The Northern Ireland Library Authority, more commonly known as Libraries NI, is a regional body responsible for the provision and delivery of a public library service in Northern Ireland. Libraries NI is the largest single library authority in the UK. Our primary duty, as set down in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 The Board of Libraries NI, when fully constituted, comprises a Chairperson and not more than 18 Members, the majority of whom, as far as is practicable, are councillors within the meaning of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. The Department for Communities is responsible for determining the number of Board Members and for making appointments to the Board of Libraries NI. There are presently twelve Board Members and an independent Chairperson.

### 1.3 Our Vision

*A relevant, accessible and inclusive library service making a difference to the lives of people and communities.*

### 1.4 Our Mission

*To provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.*

We are passionate about libraries and as we deliver against our mission we will strive to encourage reading, creativity and lifelong learning, to enrich lives, and to connect people and communities with culture, heritage, information, ideas and experiences. We want to amplify the role, impact and contribution of our libraries in the lives of people and communities and to societal wellbeing.

### 1.5 Our Values

<b>Caring</b>	We care about our customers, the communities we serve, the colleagues we work with and the services we provide. We will provide a safe, friendly and welcoming environment, we will promote a culture of openness and transparency, respect diversity and treat our customers, staff and partners fairly.
<b>Accountable</b>	We are accountable, we will act with honesty and integrity and maintain high standards of governance, responsible leadership and efficient operations.
<b>Progressive</b>	We are a progressive, forward-looking, learning organisation, responsive to our customers, open to new ideas and better ways to serve people and communities. We have a focus on quality, are creative and flexible and will continue to explore innovative ways of working to ensure that services are vibrant, effective and relevant to the changing needs of our customers.



## 1.6 Our Network and Services

The library network is crucial to the delivery of both an effective and comprehensive library service taking account of the geographic and demographic spread of Northern Ireland. A wide range of free services are delivered through a network of 96 branch libraries, Heritage libraries, mobile libraries, a Homecall service as well as through online channels, and include:

- books and other material such as audio books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines
- downloadable eBooks, audio books, eNewspapers and eMagazines and other online resources, most of which can also be accessed from home
- supported access to computers for use by the general public with free internet access for library members
- support for the development of ICT skills
- free Wi-Fi, enabling library members to use their own devices
- learning opportunities
- storytimes, rhythm and rhyme sessions and other activities for children
- school class visits
- family history, heritage and local studies material
- access to information from a range of sources and organisations
- access to cultural and creative experiences, including art and music
- reading groups for children, teenagers and adults
- health and wellbeing information, activities and events
- social activities, such as 'Knit and Natter' and 'Tea and Newspapers', which promote community cohesion and combat isolation
- study, meeting and shared social space.

## 1.7 Our Staff Customer Promise

Libraries are all about people and in the 21st century have evolved as multi-faceted, multi-channel delivery organisations serving communities. Library customers are at the heart of what we do as an organisation, they reflect a wide and diverse demographic, and engage with the library for a variety of services and in a variety of ways. We will respond to customer needs and expectations through our Customer First Strategy as we continue to value the many and different people who come to libraries to use the services we offer. Our Staff Customer Promise sets out, under five themes, our approach and intentions when engaging with the many and varied library customers. This is summarised below.



## 2. The Planning Context

- 2.1 In developing the Annual Business Plan 2025/26 consideration has been given to a range of external factors that influence, shape and impact on libraries, library use and the public sector landscape within which the library service is delivered. These factors include public policy, economic, social, cultural, technological developments, library customers and our staff. We recognise that we do not operate in isolation and take account of the wider economic and societal challenges and government priorities as well as strategic developments taking place in respect of library service provision and wider public service provision generally.
- 2.2 In developing this business plan we have taken account of our statutory responsibility, set out in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, to deliver a comprehensive and efficient public library service and this requires us to provide a service that is wide-ranging and multi-faceted. Our priorities and goals are guided by the priorities of the Department for Communities, the Public Library Policy and the wider framework of societal outcomes articulated by the Northern Ireland Executive within the Programme for Government. We believe libraries can continue to make a lasting and sustainable contribution to improving the societal wellbeing of people and communities in Northern Ireland.
- 2.3 This Annual Business Plan draws on a new draft Corporate Plan developed by Libraries NI which sets out our focus, priorities and corporate goals for the next five years. Libraries will support a number of priorities and missions identified within the Programme for Government, including education, early years and child development, tackling root causes of poverty, loneliness, and exclusion, while facilitating social inclusion, positive mental health and wellbeing, employment, digital inclusion and promoting shared spaces and safer communities.
- 2.4 Libraries NI has a network of libraries providing an infrastructure of welcoming, comfortable, neutral, stigma-free and accessible community venues that people visit through choice. All libraries provide a range of reading materials, information and resources, including free access to broadband and Wi-Fi, programmes and activities. Libraries can act as a gateway for people to access information and many other government and public services from premises situated in the heart of local communities.
- 2.5 Libraries also have an important role to play by contributing to the wider cross-cutting strategy, policy and legislative framework. This includes in areas such as Heritage, Culture and Creativity, social inclusion, anti-poverty strategy, Children and Young People, skills development, the Rural Policy Framework and Digital Inclusion and Transformation. Responding to the climate change challenge will also inform our work and approach and we will continue to play an active role in Community Planning as a statutory partner.
- 2.6 The public sector financial landscape remains challenging and constrained and we have worked closely with the Minister and officials from the Department for Communities to secure the necessary levels of investment to deliver against this plan. The additional funding provided in the 2025/26 allocation, while not addressing all challenges faced will ease financial pressures such as inflation



and allow us to meet our statutory obligation to deliver a comprehensive and efficient public library service and make a difference by positively impacting on the people and communities we serve.

- 2.7 As we move into 2025/26 we are under no illusion about the challenges that lie ahead. We recognise that our staff are central to everything we do in the delivery of the public library service. Despite all the changes that have taken place, our staff have continued to provide high quality service and the feedback received from library customers consistently tells us that they value highly the knowledge, skills and support provided by our staff across the library network. The challenges of recent years have impacted on staffing and staff morale and investment in our people will be crucial to future success. We will continue to implement the new organisation structures and engage with our staff and provide them with opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can continue to deliver high quality, professional and customer focused services.
- 2.8 Partnership working will continue to be important to creating and adding across the public library network in Northern Ireland. We will have a focus on extending partnerships and building new ones to support individuals and communities and we will continue to work positively with a range of organisations to seek to optimise potential and opportunity, and to positively impact on local and regional prosperity and wellbeing.

### 3. Our Focus – Priorities and Strategic Goals

- 3.1 This Annual Business Plan has been developed taking account of the themes, priorities and strategic goals set out in our draft Corporate Plan 2025 – 30. Our focus and priorities are built around three key areas and themes:

<i>Theme:</i>	<i>Priority:</i>
<b>Connect, support, inspire</b>	<b>1. Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life.</b>
<b>Engage, reach, strengthen</b>	<b>2. Contribute to inclusive, cohesive, communities and societal wellbeing.</b>
<b>Inform, transform deliver</b>	<b>3. Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society.</b>

- 3.2 Twelve strategic goals have been developed to support delivery against the overarching themes and these are set out in section four along with specific actions and targets.
- 3.3 Further details on our strategic themes, priorities and goals are set out in the draft Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2025 – 30.

## **4. 2025/26 Strategic Goals, Annual Targets and Objectives**

- 4.1 The following section sets out, in detail, the Libraries NI themes, priorities, strategic goals, annual targets and objectives.

## 4.2 Annual Business Plan 2025/26

Priority 1: Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life.				
<i>(Connect, support, inspire)</i>				
	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
1	Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.	1.1	Progress implementation of the Reading and Reader Development Strategy 2024 – 2027.	DLS
		1.2	Deliver a minimum of ten programmes and initiatives (for both children and adults) to support reading and literacy in libraries and online.	DLS
		1.3	Collaborate with partners to increase the number of people participating in programmes and initiatives to encourage engagement in reading related activities, including storytelling/oral tradition.	DLS
		1.4	Provide a range of resources and services including programmes, activities and initiatives to support lifelong learning.	DLS
		1.5	Increase library membership and encourage participation to achieve by 31 March 2026:	DLS
			(a) 3,500,000 loans and renewals	DLS
			(b) 2,500,000 e loans (including eBooks, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines)	DLS
			(c) 300,000 active members	DLS
			(d) 100,000 new members	DLS
		1.6	Deliver a minimum of 25 reading activities aimed at people in the 18 areas aligned to the RAISE <sup>1</sup> programme within Northern Ireland (children, young people parents and carers) by 31 March 2026.	DLS

<sup>1</sup> The RAISE programme is an initiative, sponsored by the Department of Education, which aims to raise achievement to reduce educational disadvantage by targeting 18 areas.

**Priority 1: Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life.**

***(Connect, support, inspire)***

	<b>Strategic Goal:</b>		<b>Annual Targets/Objectives:</b>	
2	Provide opportunities for people to engage in an evolving digital world and improve digital literacy while promoting libraries as trusted access points to services and information, including other public services.	2.1	Deliver a relevant Digital Service Offer by providing a range of accessible services, programmes and training opportunities.	DLS
		2.2	Provide comprehensive access to ICT, including computer resources, Wi-Fi, PATs and internet access across the library network.	DBS
		2.3	Raise awareness and promote the library network, infrastructure and resources as channels to access information and signpost individuals and communities to appropriate information sources and services.	DLS
		2.4	Deliver 700 learning opportunities aimed at improving digital literacy by 31 March 2026.	DLS
3	Provide library resources, services and activities to support and help children develop through their early years.	3.1	Review and refresh the library service offer for children and young people by March 2027.	DLS
		3.2	Collaborate with a range of partners to increase and retain the number of children and young people who become library members, engage with library services and participate in library programming.	DLS
		3.3	Work in partnership with the Department of Education and the Education Authority to contribute to the delivery of RAISE programme objectives in libraries.	DLS
		3.4	Explore opportunities to reimagine children's libraries including pop-up libraries as appropriate.	DLS

## Priority 2: Contribute to inclusive, cohesive, communities and societal wellbeing.

*(Engage, reach, strengthen)*

	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
4	Provide a relevant, accessible library service that meets the evolving needs of people in Northern Ireland.	4.1	Maintain multiple channels to deliver effective library services, including static libraries, mobile libraries and online.	DLS
		4.2	In light of changing patterns of use, customer needs, and the requirements of efficiency and effectiveness, carry out a review and make recommendations on the future of the library network including size of library estate, library locations, mobile and Homecall services and opening hours by 31 March 2026.	DLS
		4.3	Develop and deliver a service offering to meet the needs of existing customers and to engage new customers.	DLS
		4.4	Develop actions and update plans in line with the updated public library policy when issued by the Department for Communities.	DLS
5	Promote awareness and use of library services, engage new audiences and provide an exemplary customer driven approach and experience for people who use library services.	5.1	Develop and finalise the design of the new Corporate Plan by June 2025 and deliver the communications strategy to launch the new corporate plan by September 2025.	DLS
		5.2	Develop Libraries NI branding for online and social media in line with the Content Social Media Strategy by 31 March 2026.	DLS
		5.3	Progress the implementation of the Strategic Marketing Plan 2024 – 2026, specifically promoting and raising awareness of library services using a range of communication channels and methods.	DLS
		5.4	Commence implementation of the CustomerFirst Strategy 2025 – 2028.	DLS



## Priority 2: Contribute to inclusive, cohesive, communities and societal wellbeing.

*(Engage, reach, strengthen)*

	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
6	Provide information, programmes and services that contribute to positive health and wellbeing.	6.1	Deliver a range of programming which promotes libraries as welcoming spaces in which to participate in activities that impact positively on Health and Wellbeing.	DLS
7	Build, develop and use the extensive library collections to illustrate and increase understanding of a shared cultural heritage.	7.1	Promote access to, engagement with, and participation in Cultural Heritage Services and Resources.	DLS
		7.2	Expand engagement with and access to library heritage collections by working with a minimum of three local cultural heritage festivals by 31 March 2026.	DLS

## Priority 3: Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society

*(Inform, transform, deliver)*

	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
8	Support and develop our people to be a highly capable, engaged and empowered workforce.	8.1	Reduce overall sickness absence levels (FTE days lost) to 11.50 days, or less (from the baseline figure of 13.5 days as of 31 March 2025).	DBS
		8.2	Implement and embed revised structures for service delivery and determine, as appropriate, any further changes needed by 31 March 2026.	DLS
		8.3	Develop and Implement a Health and Wellbeing Strategy to support our people's physical and mental health and positive lifestyle choices by October 2025.	DBS

### Priority 3: Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society

*(Inform, transform, deliver)*

	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
		8.4	Re-establish regular staff performance appraisal processes at all levels throughout the organisation with a view to having 80% of appraisals completed by 30 June 2025 and 90% completed by 30 September 2025.	DBS
		8.5	Engage with staff to bolster morale and strengthen organisational culture and resilience, including completion of an IIP baseline survey.	SMT
9	Make best use of available resources to deliver an effective and valued public library service.	9.1	Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 submitted for audit by 26 July 2025 and certified by NIAO by 31 October 2025.	DBS
		9.2	Deliver annual resource and capital expenditure within 1% underspend of respective total budgets by 31 March 2026.	DBS
		9.3	Implement key deliverables of the e3 project to include rollout of final phase of card payment functionality, corporate and public IT equipment refresh and corporate system functionality by 31 March 2026.	DBS
		9.4	Engage with the Department for Communities on the approach to the funding of the public library service (resource and capital) with the aim of ensuring a sustainable basis for investment, development and delivery of the service.	SMT
		9.5	Review the Corporate Risk Register quarterly at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board, and review Service and Project Risk Registers bi-annually at relevant Committees.	DBS
		9.6	Maintain an effective organisational and governance framework to enable delivery of high-quality library services.	DBS/CE
		9.7	Annually aim to spend a minimum of £2.25 per head of population (or revised Public Library Standard) on library resources, book stock and reading materials.	DLS
10	Collate, prepare and disseminate evidence to demonstrate the impact	10.1	Initiate by March 2026 an impact study of a library programme to demonstrate and evidence the social value of libraries.	DLS

### Priority 3: Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society

#### *(Inform, transform, deliver)*

	Strategic Goal:		Annual Targets/Objectives:	
	of libraries, library programmes and service offers, and contribute to debate and discussion on wider library developments.	10.2	Build a library of evidence illustrating the positive societal, health, cultural and educational impacts of library services.	DLS
		10.3	Explore options to develop research projects/initiatives, including collaborations with others.	DLS
		10.4	Submit a minimum of ten papers, reports or presentations to professional publications, conferences or webinars.	DLS
11	Shape our libraries to be attractive, accessible, and trusted spaces.	11.1	Implement major and minor capital works and maintenance programmes in line with available resources by 31 March 2026.	DBS
		11.2	Review and refresh Libraries NI's five year Asset Management Plan to reflect physical library infrastructure needs and inform investment decisions by 30 September 2025.	DBS
		11.3	Develop an agreed strategy and approach with the Department for Communities to progress the Belfast Central Library redevelopment project.	SMT
		11.4	Progress the delivery of the Enniskillen Library project.	DBS
12	Actively respond to the climate change challenge.	12.1	Take a proactive, whole organisation, approach to tackling climate change commitments, including the promotion of principles in the Green Library Manifesto.	DLS/ DBS
		12.2	Develop and deliver four targeted energy management infrastructure projects by 31 March 2026 which will directly contribute to lowering the organisation net energy consumption by 30% by 2030 (2016/17 baseline year).	DBS
		12.3	Incorporate positive actions to monitor and mitigate climate change impacts in major and minor capital works and maintenance programmes by 31 March 2026.	DBS

## 5. Measuring Results

- 5.1 Effective planning, performance management and reporting are vital in ensuring that the needs of service users are met, essential services are delivered and statutory obligations discharged and that the organisation continues to improve and be open and transparent about progress and risks.
- 5.2 Strategic Goals related to the priority areas identified in this plan will be monitored and their delivery and impact measured at the organisation level. In addition, Libraries form a vital part of the public sector ecosystem, impacting positively across a wide number of domains and indicators of Wellbeing highlighted within the Programme for Government, including health, education, children and young people, societal wellbeing, digital inclusion, connecting people and strengthening communities. We have a strong track record of working in partnership with central government departments, local government and the community and voluntary sectors to deliver services that are relevant, and which make a positive impact to people and communities, particularly at a local level. Measuring this wider impact of libraries is very difficult and in this regard we will look to broader measures, information and frameworks to inform achievements, success and impact.
- 5.3 The existing performance management framework in Libraries NI consists of different elements including:
- the Corporate Plan which sets out the high level outcomes and strategic actions linked to the PfG and DfC strategies for library services
  - an Annual Business Plan which sets out the actions we need to take and the targets that we need to achieve in year
  - Key Performance Indicators, which are used to report regularly at Board level and to DfC on progress in relation to the Annual Business Plan
  - Service Plans which translate the Business Plan into more detailed actions and targets to be taken forward by various teams within the organisation
  - the Staff Appraisal process which includes the setting of personalised targets and goals for individual members of staff to enable them to fulfil their respective roles in meeting the actions and targets set out in the Service Plans
  - the Risk Management and associated assurance processes which are embedded in the routines and activities of the organisation and provide a structured and coherent approach to identifying, assessing and managing the risk to achievement of objectives and
  - the Annual Report and Accounts which provide detailed information on our work during the year.

- 5.4 The Priority Areas, Strategic Goals and Key Performance Indicators for the 2025/26 Business Plan are set out below.

**Table 1: Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

<b>Priority 1: Promote reading, inspire, support and connect people through all stages of life.</b> <b>(Connect, support, inspire)</b>	
<p><b>Strategic Goal:</b></p> <p>Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for people to engage in an evolving digital world and improve digital literacy while promoting libraries as trusted access points to services and information, including other public services.</p> <p>Provide library resources, services and activities to support and help children develop through their early years.</p>	<p><b>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</b></p> <p>No. loans and renewals against target.</p> <p>No. e loans against target<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>No. new members against target.</p> <p>No. active members against target.</p> <p>No. reading activities delivered in RAISE programme areas</p> <p>No. of learning opportunities to improve digital literacy measured against target.</p>
<b>Priority 2: Contribute to inclusive, cohesive, communities and societal wellbeing.</b> <b>(Engage, reach, strengthen)</b>	
<p><b>Strategic Goal:</b></p> <p>Provide a relevant, accessible library service that meets the evolving needs of people in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Promote awareness and use of library services, engage new audiences and provide an exemplary customer driven approach and experience for people who use library services</p>	<p><b>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</b></p> <p>95% of branch libraries opened and / or providing services.</p> <p>Positive customer satisfaction rating.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>Achieve 95% of total available PATS hours / Wi-Fi hours.</p> <p>95% of libraries delivering at least one core activity regularly.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Includes eBooks, eAudiobooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines)

<sup>3</sup> The primary source of data will be the Continuous Household Survey with supplementary data from the Libraries NI Triennial Customer Survey where this is available.



<p>Provide information, programmes and services that contribute to positive health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Build, develop and use the extensive library collections to illustrate and increase understanding of a shared cultural heritage</p>	
--	--

<b>Priority 3: Deliver a high performing library service, valued by society (Inform, transform, deliver)</b>	
<p><b>Strategic Goal:</b></p> <p>Support and develop our people to be a highly capable, engaged and empowered workforce.</p> <p>Make best use of available resources to deliver an effective and valued public library service.</p> <p>Collate, prepare and disseminate evidence to demonstrate the impact of libraries, library programmes and service offers, and contribute to debate and discussion on wider library developments.</p> <p>Shape our libraries to be attractive, accessible, and trusted spaces.</p> <p>Actively respond to the climate change challenge</p>	<p><b>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):</b></p> <p>Annual net spend (resource and capital) will be within budget. Underspend will be minimised to <math>\leq 1\%</math> of budget.</p> <p>Target spend of £2.25 per capita on Stock resources</p> <p>Capital and minor works programmes will be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetable and budget.</p> <p>Reduce overall sickness absence levels, FTE days lost, to 11.50 days or less (from the baseline figure of 13.50 days at 31 March 2025).</p> <p>95% of ICT service provision standards will be met.</p> <p>98% of invoices will be paid within 30 working days.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>90% of invoices will be paid within 10 working days.</p> <p>95% of Internal Audit service targets and standards will be met.</p> <p>90% of Staff Appraisals completed by 30 September 2025.</p>

<sup>4</sup> Invoices paid within 30 working days is an internal service target and not a formal KPI and is included for reporting purposes only.

## 6. Financing Our Services

- 6.1 The early stages of the 2025/26 financial year saw a return to interim funding arrangements and an initial budget allocation being provided in April, equivalent to 25% of the 2024-25 Budget (£8,147,000). Interim funding arrangements were superseded in late May by provision of an Indicative Opening Budget Allocation for the entire 2025/26 financial year of £34,017,000 (confirmation subject to conclusion and outworkings of the Department for Communities Budget 2025/26 Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)).
- 6.2 The indicative resource allocation for 2025/26 increases the baseline funding position by some £2,828,000 from the previous year's opening baseline (a general additional allocation of £1,428,000 plus protection of the £1,400,000 allocated in year during 2024-25). While indicative, pending the outcomes from the Departmental EQIA, the 2025/26 allocation provides a more stable environment, than seen in previous years and in which to plan and deliver public library services throughout the remainder of the year.
- 6.3 Based on current projections, we anticipate expenditure against the resource allocation in 2025/26 will be as set out in Table 2 below:

**Table 2: Category of Spend**

Category of Spend	£000's
Staff	20,912
Stock	2,000
Premises	6,199
Supplies and services	5,865
Vehicle	238
Sub-total	<b>35,214</b>
Income	(1,197)
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>34,017</b>

- 6.4 Capital funding continues to present significant challenges and the indicative opening capital budget for 2025/26 at £1,759,000 effectively limits investment to meeting existing contractual commitments and inescapable projects only. These including ongoing delivery of the e3 ICT project, construction of the replacement library facility for Enniskillen and completion of a number of small health and safety related project commenced in 2024/25.

## **7. Governance and Delivering the Business Plan**

- 7.1 Libraries NI has a corporate governance framework which specifies organisation and governance structures, including roles and responsibilities, to ensure proper and effective management and delivery of plans and priorities within available resources. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring delivery of the Libraries NI Business Plan and is supported in this by two Directors who manage core business groups to deliver library services to the public and to provide support services within the organisation. Arrangements are in place for regular monitoring of the Business Plan and the Libraries NI Board and Committees provide scrutiny and oversight.
- 7.2 Libraries NI has a well-established framework for risk management. A number of risks identified in 2024/25 are likely to continue be relevant in 2025/26 and these include:
- Libraries NI continues to engage with the Department for Communities to secure a more realistic and sustainable approach to funding that will support delivery of statutory library services.
  - The level of uncertainty about longer term planning, investment and constraints on public finances represent risks that are likely to continue to impact into 2025/26 and will be monitored and where possible actions taken to manage and mitigate them.
  - Staff are our key asset and there is a need to complete the next stage of organisation restructuring, continue to recruit to vacant posts in a challenging recruitment environment, develop a staff health and wellbeing strategy and take actions to improve sickness absence levels.
- 7.3 At the start of each business cycle a fundamental review of the corporate risk register is undertaken with a view to ensuring a strategic focus is maintained on key risks to the achievement of objectives and targets.

## **Appendix 1: Libraries NI Board Members**

Ms Bonnie Anley	Chairperson
Councillor Julie Gilmour	Vice Chairperson
Councillor Alistair Cathcart	
Mr Adrian Driscoll	
Councillor Rosie Kinnear	
Councillor Roisin Lynch	
Councillor Andrew McAuley	
Councillor Martin McRandal	
Ms Ursula O'Hare	
Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE	
Mr John Peto	
Councillor Gareth Sharvin	
Miss Linda Wilson	

Board membership as at 31 March 2025.

## Appendix 2: Libraries NI - Organisation Structure

