

**Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties
Annual Progress Report 2022-23**

Contact:

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Disability Action Plan	As above <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Name: Telephone: Email:

Documents published relating to our Equality Scheme can be found at:

<https://www.librariesni.org.uk/about-us/corporate-documents-and-information/equality/>

Signature:



This report has been prepared using a template circulated by the Equality Commission.

It presents our progress in fulfilling our statutory equality and good relations duties, and implementing Equality Scheme commitments and Disability Action Plans.

This report reflects progress made between April 2022 and March 2023

PART A – Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Scheme

SECTION 1: EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS OUTCOMES, IMPACTS AND GOOD PRACTICE

In 2022-23, please provide **examples** of key policy/service delivery developments made by the public authority in this reporting period to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations; and the outcomes and improvements achieved.

Please relate these to the implementation of your statutory equality and good relations duties and Equality Scheme where appropriate.

- 1. Wider global economic, societal and political factors combined to create an extraordinarily challenging operational context and environment in 2022/23. Double digit inflation, rapidly rising costs and a cost of living crisis combined to cause unprecedented disruption to peoples' lives, society and public services, including library services. Despite the extraordinary challenges, during 2022/23, we largely recovered from the disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, we adjusted to new ways of working and library activities and services returned to a more normal footing.**
- 2. This new crisis highlighted the importance of the public library service in making a difference to the lives of people in our local communities. The local library, once again, proving to be a safe, welcoming and inclusive space and place where people were able to meet, connect and make use of a comprehensive library service, including the wide range of free events, activities and resources available there.**
- 3. The experience of the previous two years and the Covid-19 pandemic had shown us how easily many in our in society could be excluded from being able to access services and resources. As a consequence the importance of digital choices and inclusion remains high on our agenda, and throughout 2022/23 Libraries NI offered a range of programmes and activities aimed at facilitating digital inclusion and helping people to carry out more day-to-day tasks online, access resources effectively and engage with government departments and bodies through official websites such as NIDirect. In particular there was a focus on showing people how to stay connected and how the internet can make life easier, cheaper, healthier and more fun.**
- 4. Recognising that the most significant opportunities to improve life opportunities exist in the form of early interventions, activities aimed at children and young people formed a key element of Libraries NI's approach to tackling social exclusion. Rhythm and Rhyme sessions designed to help develop pre-literacy and early learning skills continued to be popular, attracting substantial numbers of children and their parents and carers. Support and resources within library settings as well as online resources, providing tools, tips and fun learning activities, were available to give parents and carers increased confidence to support their young children with the early stages of reading and emotional development. Storytimes, reading groups, a new initiative called Readers Champion and the Summer Reading Challenge 2022, delivered in partnership with The Reading Agency, are examples of activities that encourage reading for pleasure, which, research shows, is linked to improved educational outcomes.**
- 5. Our work and the services we provide continued to be informed by the Department for Communities Building Inclusive Communities Strategy, community planning and**

wider government priorities and 2022/23 saw our focus return to strengthening the contribution that libraries make to social, community and economic wellbeing as community hubs where people can access a wide variety of learning, information and social resources that make a difference to their quality of life in both the short and long term.

6. Libraries NI continued to play a key role as a statutory partner in the Community Planning process and as local Councils and other Community Planning partners have begun to reengage following the pandemic the focus has been on developing actions aimed at addressing the immediate impacts the subsequent economic and cost of living crisis.
7. Libraries NI continues to be committed to the Equality Commission 'Every Customer Counts – Promoting Accessible Services' initiative.
8. All of the activities, programmes and services provided by Libraries NI during this period were inclusive and where appropriate looked to increase the understanding of and respect for other cultures, traditions and beliefs. Libraries NI continues to be accessible to all whether for social interaction, learning a new skill or exploring different cultural traditions.
9. Quarterly policy screening reports were issued to consultees and published on the Libraries NI website.

PART A

- 2 Please provide **examples** of outcomes and/or the impact of **equality action plans/** measures in 2022-23 (*or append the plan with progress/examples identified*).

Please see Appendix One: Part A Section 1 Question 2

- 3 Has the **application of the Equality Scheme** commitments resulted in any **changes** to policy, practice, procedures and/or service delivery areas during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

Yes **No (go to Q.4)** **Not applicable (go to Q.4)**

Please provide any details and examples:

- 3a With regard to the change(s) made to policies, practices or procedures and/or service delivery areas, what **difference was made, or will be made, for individuals**, i.e. the impact on those according to Section 75 category?

Please provide any details and examples:

Not applicable see response to 3 above.

- 3b What aspect of the Equality Scheme prompted or led to the change(s)? (*tick all that apply*) - **Not applicable see response to 3.**

As a result of the organisation's screening of a policy (*please give details*):

As a result of what was identified through the EQIA and consultation exercise (*please give details*):

As a result of analysis from monitoring the impact (*please give details*):

As a result of changes to access to information and services (*please specify and give details*):

Other (*please specify and give details*):

SECTION 2: PROGRESS ON EQUALITY SCHEME COMMITMENTS AND ACTION PLANS/MEASURES

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING COMPLIANCE (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 2)

4 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within job descriptions during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

An inclusive approach is mainstreamed into service provision and delivery to ensure implementation of the Equality Scheme is incorporated into Corporate, Service and Branch Plans and Staff Appraisals.

5 Were the Section 75 statutory duties integrated within performance plans during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes, organisation wide
- Yes, some departments/jobs
- No, this is not an Equality Scheme commitment
- No, this is scheduled for later in the Equality Scheme, or has already been done
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Libraries NI remains committed to an inclusive approach to service delivery and continually reviews services to people with disabilities, access to buildings and supports continuous improvement through training programmes. Libraries NI works in partnership with other organisations to maximise inclusive service delivery.

6 In the 2022-23 reporting period were **objectives/ targets/ performance measures** relating to the Section 75 statutory duties **integrated** into corporate plans, strategic planning and/or operational business plans? *(tick all that apply)*

- Yes, through the work to prepare or develop the new corporate plan
- Yes, through organisation-wide annual business planning
- Yes, in some departments/jobs
- No, these are already mainstreamed through the organisation's ongoing corporate plan
- No, the organisation's planning cycle does not coincide with this 2022-23 report
- Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Libraries NI is committed to an inclusive approach to service delivery. Libraries NI continually reviews services to people with disabilities, access to buildings and supports continuous improvement through training programmes. Libraries NI works in partnership with other organisations to maximise inclusive service delivery.

EQUALITY ACTION PLANS/MEASURES

7 Within the 2022-23 reporting period, please indicate the **number** of:

Actions completed: Actions ongoing: Actions to commence:

Please provide any details and examples *(in addition to question 2)*:

Libraries NI delivered a range of activities, events, programmes and initiatives through its network of 98 libraries and via online services throughout 2022/23. Many of these are delivered in conjunction with strategic and local partnerships supported by formal Memoranda of Understanding and service level agreements.

8 Please give details of changes or amendments made to the equality action plan/measures during the 2022-23 reporting period (points not identified in an appended plan):

Not applicable

9 In reviewing progress on the equality action plan/action measures during the 2022-23 reporting period, the following have been identified: *(tick all that apply)*

- Continuing action(s), to progress the next stage addressing the known inequality
- Action(s) to address the known inequality in a different way
- Action(s) to address newly identified inequalities/recently prioritised inequalities

- Measures to address a prioritised inequality have been completed

A review of the Libraries NI Audit of Inequalities was completed in late 2019. An Action Plan was agreed and implementation of actions was due to commence in 2021-22 however the onset and subsequent impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic effectively halted progress. While we have seen a return to a more normal operating environment in 2022/23 new challenges emerged in the form of economic pressures, the absence of local political institutions, departmental ministers and a developing 'cost of living' crisis. The pace of change and constant need to react to the volatile business environment has provided little opportunity to revisit and reinvigorate the action plan, as a consequence much of 2022/23 has been spent in 'survival mode' and it has very much been a year of consolidation of existing actions as set out in our Equality Scheme .

ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTING (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 3)

- 10 Following the initial notification of consultations, a targeted approach was taken – and consultation with those for whom the issue was of particular relevance: *(tick one box only)*

- All the time Sometimes Never

Not Applicable - There were no consultations undertaken in the 2022-23 reporting period

- 11 Please provide any **details and examples of good practice** in consultation during the 2022-23 reporting period, on matters relevant (e.g. the development of a policy that has been screened in) to the need to promote equality of opportunity and/or the desirability of promoting good relations:

Not applicable - No policy was screened in during the period

- 12 In the 2022-23 reporting period, given the consultation methods offered, which consultation methods were **most frequently used by consultees**: *(tick all that apply)*

- Face to face meetings
- Focus groups
- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/out of the consultation
- Internet discussions
- Telephone consultations
- Other *(please specify)*:

PART A

Please provide any details or examples of the uptake of these methods of consultation in relation to the consultees' membership of particular Section 75 categories:

See response to 10. Above - There were no consultations undertaken in the 2022-23 reporting period

- 13 Were any awareness-raising activities for consultees undertaken, on the commitments in the Equality Scheme, during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 14 Was the consultation list reviewed during the 2022-23 reporting period? *(tick one box only)*

Yes No Not applicable – no commitment to review

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSING AND CONSULTING ON THE LIKELY IMPACT OF POLICIES (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 4)

- 15 Please provide the **number** of policies screened during the year *(as recorded in screening reports)*:

14	Libraries NI Policy Screening Outcome Reports
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- 16 Please provide the **number of assessments** that were consulted upon during 2022-23 :

0	Policy consultations conducted with screening assessment presented.
0	Policy consultations conducted with an equality impact assessment (EQIA) presented.
0	Consultations for an EQIA alone.

- 17 Please provide details of the **main consultations** conducted on an assessment (as described above) or other matters relevant to the Section 75 duties:

Not Applicable - There were no consultations undertaken in the 2022-23 reporting period

- 18 Were any screening decisions (or equivalent initial assessments of relevance) reviewed following concerns raised by consultees? *(tick one box only)*

PART A

- Yes No concerns were raised No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

Libraries NI considers all feedback from consultees

ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLISHING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENTS (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 4)

- 19** Following decisions on a policy, were the results of any EQIAs published during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

No EQIA were undertaken during 2022-23

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING AND PUBLISHING THE RESULTS OF MONITORING (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 4)

- 20** From the Equality Scheme monitoring arrangements, was there an audit of existing information systems during the 2022-23 reporting period? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No, already taken place
 No, scheduled to take place at a later date Not applicable

Please provide any details:

- 21** In analysing monitoring information gathered, was any action taken to change/review any policies? (*tick one box only*)

- Yes No Not applicable

Please provide any details and examples:

- 22** Please provide any details or examples of where the monitoring of policies, during the 2022-23 reporting period, has shown changes to differential/adverse impacts previously assessed:

None

- 23 Please provide any details or examples of monitoring that has contributed to the availability of equality and good relations information/data for service delivery planning or policy development:

While 2022/23 saw a diminishing of the impacts of the Covid pandemic and a return to a more 'business as usual' environment other societal factors came into play e.g. financial and cost of living crisis. As a result the drivers for how and why the public accessed our services continued to evolve, shaping the data and feedback on the accessibility and reach of our services which in turn informed our response to the shape of current and future service delivery models and policy development

STAFF TRAINING (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 5)

- 24 Please report on the activities from the training plan/programme (section 5.4 of the Model Equality Scheme) undertaken during 2022-23, and the extent to which they met the training objectives in the Equality Scheme.

Libraries NI includes in its training plan a range of activities that are designed to increase staff's awareness and understanding of equality issues and training activities that are designed to ensure that service provision is accessible to all. These activities include:

- ***A robust staff induction process***
- ***Targeted training interventions aimed at enabling and increasing participation in library services by Section 75 groups***
- ***Opportunity for specialist staff to increase their knowledge and understanding of issues facing both staff and customers***

In 2022/23 the following training opportunities were provided:

- ***Access to the CAL e-learning Unconscious Bias module for all newly appointed staff***
- ***Access to the CAL e-learning Introduction to Section 75 and Introduction to Human Rights modules for newly appointed middle and senior managers***
- ***Access to the CAL e-learning Fire Safety Awareness module for all staff***
- ***Driver CPC (Certificate of Professional Competence) for Mobile and Homecall staff***
- ***First Aid at Work accredited training provided to designated First Aiders (10 posts)***
- ***Attendance at various training events, seminars and conferences by Library Services Directorate senior and middle management and Business Support Staff***
- ***Attendance by Branch staff, Mobile staff and Services Directorate middle management staff at Customer Service Training.***
- ***Comprehensive Induction Training programme for District Managers and District Officers on a range of topics including Online Services and Service Support, Marketing, Customer Groups, Customer Experience and Collections.***

- ***Training by Services Directorate staff to enhance Branch staff's ability to deliver core activities, including Rhythm and Rhyme, Lego Club, ScamWise, Reachdeck (formerly Browsealoud).***
- ***One member of the Senior Leadership Group completed, and two members commenced the Chief Executive Forum, Transformation Leadership Programme***

The delivery of these training activities helped to ensure that the training objectives, as detailed in the Equality Scheme, continued to be met.

- 25 Please provide any examples of relevant training shown to have worked well, in that participants have achieved the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve the stated objectives:

The training activities detailed at 24 above are those from a list of Corporate, Service and Personal Development interventions with a particular emphasis on meeting the training objectives as set out in the Equality Scheme, offered to staff throughout LNI.

The following activities are worth highlighting in particular and are examples of training that has worked well and have been aimed specifically at increasing staff's awareness of the needs of those from a variety of Section 75 groups:

- ***All Recruitment and Selection Panel members were provided with Recruitment and Selection training, including awareness of equality of opportunity and practical considerations in relation to applicants with particular needs.***
- ***Two Services Directorate senior management staff attended the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit for the 2-day event aimed at supporting and enabling persons with disabilities to achieve their career aspirations. The conference, in partnership with The Harkin Institute for Public Policy & Citizen Engagement and the Northern Ireland Department for Communities aims to positively reframe the narrative on approaching, supporting, and enabling persons with disabilities to achieve their career goals and aspirations and bring together senior leaders to highlight and address disability issues and showcase employment best practice.***
- ***District managers, Branch Library Managers, Mobile Library Managers and District Officers attended face-to-face Customer Service Training facilitated by AKU. The objective of the sessions being to engage managers and their team to further develop customer service skills such as building rapport and managing and exceeding customer expectations.***
- ***Feedback on the Transformative Leadership Programme with the Chief Executive's Forum was excellent. Reporting that the Coaching sessions. I found the Coaching sessions invaluable and that the course was performance driven, supporting the shift from operational to strategic leadership and emotional intelligence.***

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES (MODEL EQUALITY SCHEME CHAPTER 6)

- 26 Please list any examples of where monitoring during 2022-23, across all functions, has resulted in action and improvement in relation to access to information and services:

None

Complaints (Model Equality Scheme Chapter 8)

27 How many complaints in relation to the Equality Scheme have been received during 2022-23?

Insert number here:

0

Please provide any details of each complaint raised and outcome:

Section 3: Looking Forward

28 Please indicate when the Equality Scheme is due for review:

A review of the Libraries NI Equality Scheme was completed in January 2019 the next scheduled 5 yearly review will commence in late 2023 for completion early 2024.

29 Are there areas of the Equality Scheme arrangements (screening/consultation/training) your organisation anticipates will be focused upon in the next reporting period? *(please provide details)*

No specific areas have been highlighted, the review of the scheme will consider arrangements in the round and taking account of the service delivery environment prevalent at the time.

30 In relation to the advice and services that the Commission offers, what equality and good relations priorities are anticipated over the next (2023-24) reporting period? *(please tick any that apply)*

- Employment
- Goods, facilities and services
- Legislative changes
- Organisational changes/ new functions
- Nothing specific, more of the same
- Other (please state):

We anticipate we will continue in reviewing and updating a range of policies relating to employees and delivery of our services and may seek advice from the Commission when doing so.

PART B - Section 49A of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended) and Disability Action Plans

1. Number of action measures for this reporting period that have been:

Fully achieved

Partially achieved

Not achieved

2. Please outline below details on all actions that have been fully achieved in the reporting period.

2 (a) Please highlight what **public life measures** have been achieved to encourage disabled people to participate in public life at National, Regional and Local levels:

Level	Public Life Action Measures	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
National			
Regional			
Local			

2(b) What **training action measures** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Training Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Provision of the Equality Scheme and a Summary of the Scheme on the staff intranet	<u>All</u> staff have access to the intranet	The delivery of this training has ensured that staff (frontline and support staff) have appropriate and relevant awareness, knowledge and skills in the delivery of customer focused services, including to customers with needs specific to Section 75 categories.
2	Awareness raising of the Scheme as part of Staff Induction	Delivered to <u>all</u> new starts (permanent and temporary) and agency staff via local and corporate (LNI staff only) induction	
3	Access to the CAL e-learning Unconscious Bias module	Module undertaken by newly appointed staff	
4	Access to the CAL e-learning Introduction to Section 75 module	Module undertaken by middle and senior managers	
5	Access to the CAL e-learning Introduction to Human Rights module	Module undertaken by middle and senior managers	
6	Safeguarding (Children and Adults at Risk) Awareness training	All newly appointed staff (including agency/temporary contracts)	

2(c) What Positive attitudes **action measures** in the area of **Communications** were achieved in this reporting period?

	Communications Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	2022/23 saw the delivery of the second year of a committed communication and advertising programme aimed at reconnecting with our service users and making the public aware of the free and accessible services available. The programme emphasised the benefits of joining and using the library to inform and educate children, as a source of support during the cost of living crisis, a free access point to online eResources and a place of entertainment and relaxation.	The second phase of the 'Open Your Mind' campaign delivered in 2022/23 further raised awareness of public library services through informational advertising on radio and social media.	Significantly raised profile with all sectors of society of free to access public services in a safe environment and promoted the library as an access point for other public services. The number of people joining as members during the key months of advertising -September, October 2022 and January, February 2023 was some 54% higher on average compared against similar periods in the previous six years.
2	2022/23 also saw an increase in collaboration with the Department for Communities internal communications teams to promote library services and activities within the department and wider NI Civil Service whilst also, in return, there was improved promotion of departmental and central government communications to the general public in libraries through digital messaging and literature distribution.	The reach of government communications and in particular those from DfC relating to benefits and the assistance available to help in addressing the cost of living pressures was significantly extended.	A greater number of people were able to access government assistance and support

2 (d) What action measures were achieved to ‘**encourage others**’ to promote the two duties:

	Encourage others Action Measures	Outputs	Outcome / Impact
1	Libraries NI is committed to promoting positive attitudes and implements an inclusive approach to service provision.	Please see examples listed in Appendix One: Part A Section 1 Question 2.	

2 (e) Please outline **any additional action measures** that were fully achieved other than those listed in the tables above:

	Action Measures fully implemented (other than Training and specific public life measures)	Outputs	Outcomes / Impact
1	Refer to Appendix One: Part A Section 1 Question 2.		
2			

3. Please outline what action measures have been **partly achieved** as follows:

	Action Measures partly achieved	Milestones / Outputs	Outcomes/Impacts	Reasons not fully achieved
1	Refer to Appendix One: Part A Section 1 Question 2.			

4. Please outline what action measures **have not been achieved** and the reasons why.

	Action Measures not met	Reasons
1	Not applicable	
2	Not applicable	

5. What **monitoring tools** have been put in place to evaluate the degree to which actions have been effective / develop new opportunities for action?

- (a) Qualitative ***Customer Feedback process in place***
- (b) Quantitative ***number and nature of subject of complaints/compliments/feedback measured and reported to SMT and relevant Board Committees***

6. As a result of monitoring progress against actions has your organisation either:

- made any **revisions** to your plan during the reporting period or
- taken any **additional steps** to meet the disability duties which were **not outlined in your original** disability action plan / any other changes?

No. Libraries NI Disability Action Plan has been reviewed and will be subject to further review as required. If yes, please outline below:

	Revised/Additional Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale
1			

7. Do you intend to make any further **revisions to your plan** in light of your organisation's annual review of the plan? If so, please outline proposed changes?

At the time of drafting of this report (August 2023) we do not intend to make any further revisions to our Plan however continual review may result in changes being introduced at a later date.

Outputs – defined as act of producing, amount of something produced over a period, processes undertaken to implement the action measure e.g. Undertook 10 training sessions with 100 people at customer service level.

Outcome / Impact – what specifically and tangibly has changed in making progress towards the duties? What impact can directly be attributed to taking this action? Indicate the results of undertaking this action e.g. Evaluation indicating a tangible shift in attitudes before and after training.

National: Situations where people can influence policy at a high impact level e.g. Public Appointments

Regional: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at a middle impact level

Local: Situations where people can influence policy decision making at lower impact level e.g. one off consultations, local fora.

Milestones – Please outline what part progress has been made towards the particular measures; even if full output or outcomes/ impact have not been achieved.

APPENDIX 1: PART A SECTION 1 QUESTION 2

2 Libraries NI examples of outcome/impact of Equality actions/measures and statistics for 2022-23

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to impact on every area of our service delivery, preventing or significantly constraining our activities and requiring the organisation to adapt at short notice to the frequently changing social landscape, to develop alternative approaches to communication and to how we connected with our users. Despite these limitations we adapted our service offerings and delivery models so we could provide alternative inclusive and accessible services throughout the year.

A range of programmes, activities and services were delivered either in libraries or in virtual environments to support our Service Priorities including:

- Reading and Reader Development (access to information, materials and support)
- Children and Young People (targeted activities)
- Digital Inclusion
- Good Relations
- Cultural Heritage
- Support for Health and Wellbeing.

Outcome/impact of Equality action/measures 2022-23	Supporting Statistics
HEADLINE STATISTICS	
Number of new members.	78,592 (including 13,014 virtual)
eBook and Audiobook activity (items accessed/borrowed)	839,531
eMagazines downloaded	341,585
eNewspapers downloaded	286,215
Stock spend (inclusive of electronic media)	£2,330,000
Positive customer satisfaction rating	96% of customers surveyed were satisfied with the public library service (21% satisfied and 75% very satisfied)
In line with Service Priorities a range of inclusive events and programmes has been delivered by libraries throughout 2022/23	
STOCK	
READING AND READER DEVELOPMENT	
While the direct impacts of the Covid pandemic seen in previous years were largely absent in 2022/23 the long term impacts and changes in societal approaches to many areas of life including public library services remained evident. Libraries NI continued to maintain and make available through a range of media and formats an extensive stock collection contains in excess of 2,500,000 items. The collection aimed to meet the needs of the entire community	

within Northern Ireland with over 50 languages being represented in the collection.

Electronic formats such as eBooks allow readers to increase text size and change colour of text to assist their reading. Libraries NI provided access to some 1.5 million electronic items.

Stock was purchased to meet the expectations and needs of all our borrowers and included items which:

- documented, recognised and reflected the shared history of Northern Ireland
- reflected the diverse communities in Northern Ireland
- supported the reading needs of adults and children with hearing and sight impairments e.g. large print books, audiobooks and downloadable audiobooks.

Celebrating Books and Reading

Libraries NI continued its work to support readers and reader development and during October 2022 Libraries NI in partnership with BBC NI delivered Book Week. As part of the programming a number of headline events were delivered featuring authors and based around daily themes. So as to facilitate access and participation these events were presented as a mix of live and online, with a number of the events also being live streamed. Love Your Library Day was an integral part of BWNI with all branches engaging with local stakeholders to promote libraries and services. As in past years Libraries NI had a number of Book Ambassadors who promote BWNI and libraries throughout the week.

Libraries NI worked with Ballinamore Community Council in its "Better Together Project" to deliver a series of cross border events involving reading groups based in Omagh, Enniskillen, Cavan and Leitrim libraries. The programme is ongoing and allows the participants to meet and engage with individuals across the border regions, allows them to explore the themes of good relations, cultural diversity, equality and borders and boundaries.

Libraries NI supported Pride events in both Belfast and Derry, the Belfast event featured a "Read with Pride" event held in Belfast Central Library in July 2022 with Val McDermind and Stuart Neville in discussion, a Pride in our Poets performance event and an exhibition from the Out & About Hikers group, an LGBTQ+ walking group. Derry Central Library hosted the Queering the North Exhibition and the Pride in our Poets event in August.

Libraries NI participated in Belfast Book Festival and delivered a 'pop up' library in the Crescent Arts Centre from

<p>13 - 17 June 2022, LNI staff also delivered daily programming including Rhythm and Rhyme sessions and eBook clinics.</p>	
<p>ACCESS TO SERVICES</p> <p>Recognising the long term effects the Covid pandemic on society we continued to adjust our service delivery methods to accommodate the increased anxiety being experienced by various groups.</p> <p>Although limited by the wider economic landscape in which we operate our Homecall Service staff continued to deliver books and audiobooks to people who were unable to access library services independently, enabling people with disabilities to continue their reading habit and providing a vital and personal connection for many people.</p> <p>TARGETING SOCIAL EXCLUSION</p> <p>Resources continued to be targeted at 15 libraries in the lowest 10% Super Output and Urban Village areas, including two central libraries in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry</p> <p>In more general terms activities continued to provide social interaction for people at risk of isolation or exclusion including online activities and face to face physical events and meetings.</p> <p>Specific efforts were made and resources dedicated to making contact and enabling people to access digital and online services such as;</p> <p>Get Online Week</p> <p>Online IT events took place between 17 – 21 October 2022 in communities all across the UK during Get Online Week, showing people how to stay connected and how the internet can make life easier, cheaper, healthier and more fun. Libraries NI offered a programme of free Zoom and in-person sessions for customers, allowing them to discover the benefits of getting online while promoting our network of libraries, Wi-Fi, computer resources and IT help that is available all year long.</p>	

<p>DISABILITY AND SENSORY IMPAIRMENT</p> <p>Libraries NI continues to be committed to actively removing barriers to ensure that individuals living with a sensory impairment or disability, visible or hidden, have access to services. We have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invested in our physical estate to modernise and refurbish libraries to improve access and make them disability friendly • purchased a range of high quality sensory equipment for selected libraries • produced and updated autism and dementia library resource toolkits • continued to collaborate with RNIB to promote services and resources, recorded a video interview for the RNIB Connect Facebook page, a site used for promoting activities and events across NI to RNIB service users • made available on our website and publically accessible computers Reachdeck translation/text to speech/accessibility software. 	
<p>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE’S SERVICES</p> <p>We continued to deliver and develop programmes to support pre-literacy, literacy, learning, information seeking and digital skills and to foster a love of reading. Programmes included: Rhythm and Rhyme, a programme of rhymes, stories and songs for preschool children aged 0-4 and their parents/carers, supplemented by resources on our website including rhymes, reading challenges, rhyming information and fun activities to help parents and carers develop their child’s communication and language skills.</p> <p>Reading Challenges</p> <p>The Summer Reading Challenge “Gadgeteers” was delivered in partnership with The Reading Agency July and August 2022, with associated reading resources and over 390 library events hosted. 13,049 children participated, 160,264 books were borrowed and 23,881 reaches/impressions achieved.</p> <p>Elmer’s Big Belfast Trail 2022</p> <p>Belfast City Council hosted a family friendly art trail as a collaboration between Northern Ireland Hospice, Wild in Art and Anderson Press, which brought to life the David McKee children’s book character Elmer the patch work elephant. Uniquely decorated Elmer’s were positioned at key landmarks in Belfast during the summer and also travelled around Northern Ireland. At the end of the Trail the Elmer’s were auctioned to raise funds for the Northern Ireland Hospice. To tie in with this, Libraries NI celebrated Elmer the Elephant story times in libraries across Northern Ireland during July and August.</p>	

**Joseph Coelho Visit to Finaghy Library,
27 September 2022**

Poet Joseph Coelho has been appointed the Waterstones Children's Laureate for 2022 - 2024. Joseph's mission is to join a library in every local authority in the UK to encourage library membership and highlight the vital role libraries play in inspiring a love of reading. In partnership with BookTrust NI, Finaghy Library was selected as the first library that Joseph would visit as the Waterstone's Children's Laureate. Primary Five pupils from Finaghy Primary School were invited and enjoyed an excellent and inspiring event, after which they were gifted a copy of 'Smile Out Loud' by Joseph Coelho.

BookTrust Storytime Prize

The BookTrust Storytime Prize is a national initiative to identify the best book for sharing with children 0-5 years. Staff delivered lively story time sessions which focused on the titles supplied that were nominated for the BookTrust Storytime Prize. 37 libraries took part in this annual event which aims to find the best book for sharing with 0-5s. Copies of the six shortlisted titles were gifted to participating branches, who then conducted a vote during Rhythm and Rhyme and storytime sessions to determine favourite titles.

During February 2023 Libraries NI partnered with **Book Trust NI** to distribute 7500 Bookstart Packs to local children. Packs were delivered to all branches and mobiles to be gifted to children aged 0-12 months. Library promotional material is included with each pack to encourage parents to register their children and return for library events like Rhythm and Rhyme.

NI Science Festival

During February 2023 Libraries NI partnered with (Science Starz) to distribute 100+ science boxes to children across NI. Libraries NI initially partnered with NI Science Festival during lockdown when their public events were cancelled, and they produced experiments in boxes that children could undertake at home.

World Book Day

Libraries NI celebrated World Book Day on Thursday 2 March with a series of special events and activities taking place in libraries across Northern Ireland. Children were invited to share in some wonderful stories, crafts and rhymes with fancy dress optional but encouraged! Paul Howard and Andrew Whitson, both illustrators whose books were included in the World Book Day 2023 £1 offer delivered sessions to local schoolchildren in 4 libraries across NI.

TEEN SERVICES

Specific services developed and delivered for the 16 – 18 year old group include:

- Wi-Fi and free access to computers in all libraries
- study space
- teenage books
- curriculum study guides
- target events including teenage reading groups and creative writing.

Customer Groups delivered a book talk to third level students reading a Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies, March 2023. It highlighted the importance of reading and language development and promoted library books, resources and library services for young children. There was a demonstration how to really engage with children when reading a story, how to make a story sack and how activities for further extended learning can be created from this.

Library services for teens and young people were promoted at a health fair in Portadown alongside a wide range of organisations from the statutory, voluntary and charity sectors. The focus was on mental health and wellbeing and library resources and Reading Well collections were highlighted.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

From April 2022 Libraries NI continued to offer digital support through a range of platforms aimed at providing easy access to basic digital skills and helping people to help themselves and/or others maintain contact with friends and family and access online resources.

Support for digital skills development continued to be delivered and included provision of:

Go ON sessions to support digital skills development including 1-2-1 eclinics, with 479 sessions and 1498 participants taking part. New modules were developed including *Media Literacy* and *Family History: 1901 and 1911 Census*. These modules, including help to access to eResources, contributed to improving customer digital skills, assisting in reducing social isolation by enabling e-access to family, friends and library resources. Help sheets providing tailored information on various topics were also made available to ensure that the public could help themselves and/or others maintain contact with friends and family and access online resources.

Safer Internet Day

Safer Internet Day took place on the 8 February 2023 and, to mark this, a mix of workshops and promotional events took place during February promoting safer online activity and the Go ON programme. Awareness sessions were also delivered by our partners at Department of Finance in 10 branches. Libraries NI staff focused Go ON sessions on the areas of scam awareness, privacy and safer shopping online, delivering 11 sessions throughout the month to 56 participants.

EA Admissions Clinic for Pre/Primary School

Clinics were delivered in partnership with the Department of Finance Go ON NI team and the Education Authority to offer help with applications for pre/primary school places in January and post primary in February. Forms are completed online and these sessions helped people with low literacy, digital or language skills with the online form. Assistance was offered to parents and guardians regarding digital aspects or with confidence in reference to the criteria. Altogether DoF/EA were able to help 52 attendees across 29 locations from a range of community backgrounds completing the online pre-school, primary school and post primary school admissions portal.

Impact Agewell

The Mid and East Antrim Impact Agewell Partnership ran social prescribing pop-up shops in Ballymena, Larne and Carrickfergus in June 2022 to provide older people with useful information and help them become connected.

Give It a Go Month February 2023

The *Give It A Go Month* offered a wide programme of free events to encourage and inspire people of all ages to try something different or to learn a new skill. Topics included creative writing, photography, exercise, knitting, yoga and dance, as well as classes to help get people online, family history workshops, craft sessions and chess for beginners. There were 189 events delivered in branches and online via Zoom with 1,617 participants in total.

Make the Call (MtC) Wraparound Service and Libraries NI

Make the Call (MtC) Wraparound Service and Libraries NI developed a partnership to deliver benefit entitlement clinics in libraries, with Community Outreach Officers sited in libraries offering appointments to support and guide the public through their potential entitlements to benefits, supports and services. This partnership reached those who are vulnerable through age, disability, illness, or adverse circumstances to access benefits and other Government support.

SUPPORT FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Libraries NI continued to support Health and Wellbeing by providing access to health information and signposting to other organisations as well as delivering and hosting a range of activities and events. Many Health and Wellbeing events and programmes are successfully delivered through effective partnership working. Examples include:

Children's Mental Health Week, February 2023

As part of the Children's Mental Health Week initiative (6-12 February) all libraries provided postcards for children to write an uplifting and welcoming message, these were then displayed in branch. Children from Ormeau Road Library also completed Let's Connect postcards, writing messages of welcome to refugee children living in local hotel provision. 30 postcards were then distributed to the children by the Education Authorities Intercultural Education Team. Shelf Help and Reading Well collections in libraries were promoted through an interview with Kim Aiken, Deputy Head of Service, published in the [Belfast Telegraph](#) on 15 February 2023. Other programming during Children's Mental Health week included Catherine Wells (Occupational Therapist) who provided daily wellbeing messages posted on social media.

Cruse NI

Libraries NI has been working with CRUSE NI on books on loss and grief for children. Libraries NI has a pilot collection of books for children and young people dealing with bereavement in Derry Central and Omagh libraries. These libraries have been selected as they already hold the 'Death Positive Library' collection for adults. The books are on open access however clearly marked loss and grief. Libraries NI has designed and shared with CRUSE NI, a flyer to highlight the availability of these books which will be promoted on Libraries NI's website and posted on social media platforms. Libraries NI has also provided CRUSE NI with details of other titles (for children and young people up to 16 years) that will enhance its collection

School of Sanctuary Book Launch, Ormeau Road Library

Ormeau Road Library hosted the launch of "Anika's Underwater Adventure" on Thursday 22 October 2022 with a reading by Khanyisa Mafumo, Belfast City of Sanctuary. Commissioned by the Intercultural Service for the Education Authority (EA) and created and produced by Three's Theatre Company, the book was developed collaboratively with pupils from a range of primary schools, Botanic, Fane Street (A School of Sanctuary), St Brides, Millington and Holy Rosary (A School of Sanctuary). The Education Authority provided copies of the book to Libraries NI.

<p>SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) Lamps The SAD lamp initiative was further developed: 100 more SAD lamps were purchased and distributed via Mobile Libraries to Homecall customers so that they could use the lamps at home.</p> <p>AWARE NI Aware NI delivered 6 Mood Matters sessions in partnership with Libraries NI. Sessions took place in Bangor Carnegie Library, Lisburn City Library, Suffolk Library, Omagh Library, Derry Central Library and Newry City Library with 65 people attending in total. Participants were shown techniques to help cope with low mood and improve poor mental health.</p> <p>Staff Wellbeing 2022/23 continued to present our staff with a series of challenges in terms of their wellbeing. Economic and societal instability, a cost of living crisis and the general erosion of resilience following the Covid pandemic continued to fuel anxiety and concern. Efforts continued to be made to inform and educating staff, providing guidance and advice on managing anxiety in the workplace and in their private lives. Confidential support to help counter, depression, isolation and the physiological impacts of the economic crisis was also made available.</p>	
<p>GOOD RELATIONS</p> <p>In the interests of informing, nurturing and providing the spaces in which communities could interact Libraries NI delivered a range of programmes in support of good relations;</p> <p>Red Cross Refugee Programme Belfast Central Library hosted a Family Fun Day in Refugee Week, June 2022. 21 newcomer families living in hotel provision shared an afternoon of storytelling, craft and library information supported by Armstrong Storytellers Trust.</p> <p>In December 2022 our Customer Groups team delivered storytelling sessions at the Red Cross Winter Celebration event at Belfast City Hall. This was a fun event for refugee and asylum seeker children and their families who are living in hotel provision across Greater Belfast.</p> <p>Burns Night, January 2023 Seven events were delivered as part of Burns Night including storytelling with the Ulster Scots Agency, craft sessions and a tasting event with haggis, neeps and tatties. Banbridge Library hosted a talk by Matthew Warwick, Ulster Scots Agency, highland dancers and a piper. Belfast Central library hosted an exhibition and Carrickfergus held a special Knit and Natter event celebrating the life of Robert Burns.</p>	

<p>Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 January 2023 Events took place in 31 libraries celebrating the theme of Ordinary People ranging from film screenings, book group readings, displays and a Special Holocaust story time delivered by Sharon Dickson, Armstrong Storytelling Trust in Chichester Library. A Holocaust themed community art exhibition was launched by the Mayor in Bangor Carnegie Library. Belfast Central Library hosted artwork produced by Hydebank Wood College in partnership with Holocaust Memorial Day Trust.</p> <p>Compassionate Communities and Libraries NI, Death Positive Libraries Compassionate Communities NI is a public health approach to palliative and end of life care with a mission to improve the end of life and death experiences for everyone in Northern Ireland. The introduction of Death Positive Libraries (Derry, Omagh and Newry City) provided collections of books and literature which aimed to remove the barriers to talking about death and dying, support increasing death literacy, death preparedness and the development of compassionate communities.</p>	
<p>CULTURAL HERITAGE</p> <p>Heritage from Home Heritage from Home 3 was delivered from September 2022 to March 2023. The theme was migration and explored the movement of people, contemporary and historical in, out of and across Ireland. Topics covered culture, the environment, family history, literature, and historical events. In total 18 talks were delivered attracting an audience from the island of Ireland and beyond.</p>	
<p>RURAL NEEDS</p> <p>Throughout 2022/23 libraries continued to provide important services to rural dwellers including Mobile Library services, Homecall and access to online resources such as eBooks, eNewspapers and eMagazines which are available to everyone. Our rural libraries fully reopened for public access providing welcoming social spaces and access to stock and services within communities.</p> <p>Of the 14 policies/strategies/plans which were subject to a Rural Needs Impact Assessment during 2022/23 no specific rural needs actions were identified.</p>	

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

As our services continued to recover from the impacts of the Covid pandemic the focus of marketing and communications activity in 2022/23 was on connecting with our users, re-engaging with established customers and encouraging new people to visit our libraries, borrow books, attend events and use services such as computers and Wi-Fi.

Despite the challenging financial environment 2022/23 saw the delivery of the second year of a committed advertising programme. The first phase of this integrated campaign focused on promotion through advertising in Adshels/Adshel Live (at public transport stops) and exterior poster sites, with an emphasis leading up to Book Week NI. There were also digital advertising initiatives during this phase which supported social media on the corporate platforms during Book Week NI delivering an increased reach of 59% over the previous year. The second phase of the campaign utilised radio advertising to support and promote the Give it a Go programme of events and activities held in February.

The theme of 'Opening Minds Together' underpinned the images, graphics and narrative content of the advertising campaign and radio segments, emphasising the benefits of joining and using the library to inform and educate children, as a source of support during the cost of living crisis, a free access point to online eResources and a place of entertainment and relaxation. During the key periods of advertising, it was evident that significant numbers of people became members of the library with the number of people joining during the key months of advertising -September, October 2022 and January, February 2023 being some 54% higher on average compared against similar periods in the previous six years.

Action	Timescale	Expected Outcome	Progress
COMMITMENT			
Establish relationships with groups consisting of representatives of people with disabilities, to identify, provide and promote opportunities which will improve engagement by people with a disability in key work areas.	Ongoing	Relationships to be established and maintained where they already exist.	Further work undertaken throughout 2022/23 to reconnect, re-establish and strengthen relationships.
Identify and address barriers faced by people with disabilities in accessing and utilising public library services.	Annually	Feedback received or Consultation exercises undertaken in a range of mediums to ascertain the views of interested parties.	Feedback taken on board in developing responses to adapting service provision.
Identify opportunities, including the use of images, for Libraries NI to promote good practice and help to address negative stereotypes of people who have a disability and to promote positive role models.	Annually	Feedback received or Consultation exercises undertaken in a range of mediums to ascertain the views of interested parties.	Feedback taken on board in developing responses to adapting service provision.
SERVICE DELIVERY			
Consider the diversity of images used and potential for portraying a wider range of individuals when developing information materials including websites.	At design stage of material	Our promotional and communication materials are more reflective of the diversity of society as a whole	Diversity of images and content taken into consideration when designing, developing and publishing materials.
Ensure that existing and any new equality related duties are taken into account when designing any future training / educational programmes, guidance and legislation.	On commission of project or programme	Training/educational programme and guidance revised in line with new duties and legislation	Equality duties taken into account in designing training / educational programmes and adapting service delivery methods.
TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT			

Action	Timescale	Expected Outcome	Progress
Provide all staff with disability and equality awareness training and overview of legal duties.	On appointment/promotion and three yearly or as dictated by law.	Awareness training materials/providers sourced and training provided in relevant areas	Completion of the CAL e-learning Unconscious Bias module by all newly appointed staff. Completion of the CAL e-learning Introduction to Section 75 and Introduction to Human Rights modules by newly appointed middle and senior managers
Raise awareness of specific barriers faced by people with disabilities including through linking in with National Awareness Days or Weeks (such as World Mental Health Day)	Ongoing	Increased staff awareness of a range of disabilities and needs	Awareness raising an ongoing part of corporate business and staff engagement/management processes
RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION			
Promote awareness of and use of employment support programmes, such as Workable NI, by staff and line managers.	Ongoing	People with a disability are supported to access employment opportunities and remain in employment.	Support mechanisms in place and actively monitored
Encourage people with a disability to apply for opportunities in Libraries NI and onto the Board of Libraries NI providing information in accessible formats both internal and external to Libraries NI.	On instigation of recruitment action	Internal and external Recruitment Campaigns continue to actively invite people with disabilities providing information for applicants in accessible formats on the staff Intranet and Libraries NI website. Provide training to Libraries NI Board.	Our Recruitment Campaigns continue to actively invite people with disabilities and information is provided in accessible formats to assist with applications.
COMMUNICATION			

Action	Timescale	Expected Outcome	Progress
Member of the Equality Commission's Mental Health Charter and to Every Customer Counts.	Annual review	Health and wellbeing initiatives promote good mental health which benefit employees and communities across NI. LNI will continue to develop and maintain partnerships, provide free information, events, and programme and employee assistance to support mental health.	We continue to provide and promote Mental Health and Wellbeing initiatives to employees and communities across NI. Particular focus throughout 2022/23 has been on addressing the impacts of anxiety and stress arising from the current economic crisis.
Ensure accessibility of the Libraries NI website in line with current legislation/guidance	Annual review and appropriate action initiated	People with disabilities have access to information published on Libraries NI Website. Demonstration of compliance with Northern Ireland Equality Commission guidance on accessible website design.	Website redesigned and remodelled to comply with accessibility requirements work ongoing to address outstanding accessibility issues e.g. updating of document formats, addition of text descriptions for photographs etc.
Review Intranet site(s) to ensure accessibility by internal staff.	Annual review and appropriate action initiated	Website review completed and actions implemented.	Intranet site moved to accessible SharePoint platform
Collate information on reasonable adjustments that have been made for staff, to use as a central source of information for other line managers	Quarterly	Database set up Agreed elements of database made available to line managers Feedback from staff who have a disability indicates satisfaction with support provided	Database in place
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT			

Action	Timescale	Expected Outcome	Progress
Ensure that all Libraries NI owned or managed premises and other infrastructure are accessible.	Annual review in line with review of estates management plans	Audit or update audits of premises in line with DDA requirements.	Cycle of review and improvements ongoing in line with available resources
MONITORING AND REVIEWING			
Review the operation of existing services in conjunction with people with disabilities and their representatives to identify any barriers to access for this group.	By March 2024 and bi-annually thereafter	Review, development and assessment of customer feedback procedures	Progress delayed as a direct result of impacts of pandemic, minor revisions to feedback system undertaken however substantive review yet to be completed.
Ensure that, where possible, disability monitoring information is collected in respect of users of Libraries NI services and job applicants.	Annually	The collection of information is carried out using periodic surveys and questionnaires, analysing employee exit interviews or customer complaints or grievances.	Collection of information ongoing
Measure Libraries NI performance against Action Plan targets and take appropriate action where these targets are not met.	Annually	Monitoring report produced quarterly use of information on goods, facilities and services provided by Libraries NI and actions taken.	Performance Review undertaken
Encourage staff, job applicants and appointees to declare that they have a disability or care for a person with a disability through awareness raising and providing guidance to staff and applicants on the importance of monitoring.	Ongoing	More accurate data in place. Equal Opportunities form is a mandatory part of the job application process to encourage applicants to provide data to support the monitoring process. Greater number of staff feel comfortable declaring they have a disability.	Ongoing