
Libraries and Archives

Annual Report

1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

explore

Knowledge and Ideas for Everyone

City of York Libraries and Archives
managed by Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Limited
on behalf of City of York Council

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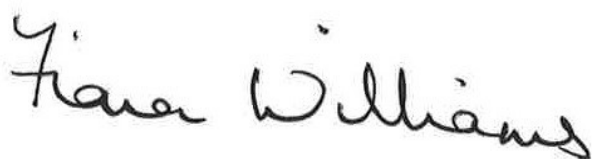
Foreword by Fiona Williams, Chief Executive

The first year of our new contract with CYC has been a busy, exciting and challenging one. Winning the 15 year contract will allow us to realise the full potential of the Explore vision and we have been busy delivering projects such as Explore Labs and On the Drawing Board, from a range of funders – Arts Council and Archives Revealed. We also continue to deliver a high quality service every day. We open the doors and help people in a myriad of ways, bringing communities together and combatting loneliness.

Sadly though, the year has ended in a way that no one could predict. The Covid 19 pandemic closed down our libraries and archives in early March and as I write this there are no plans to ease the lockdown. Some of our staff have been furloughed and the rest are working from home. We are taking advantage of this strange time to develop our online services so we can continue to deliver a variety of services to the people of York.

We are also learning how to work remotely through telephone and video conferencing. We need to make the most of this hiatus, planning for the future and reviewing our governance.

The new contract coincided with the appointment of a new Chair of the Board, Chris Edwards. Working with Chris, we began a review of our governance and the Board have held a number of sessions reviewing our vision and values. Our staff conference continued the work on these. As owners as well as employees, we involve staff as much as possible in the development of the organisation. This strengthens the organisation, staff are committed to delivering the best, and we all work together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

1. Highlights of the year

1.1 Looking back across the year, Explore has performed well. Although 19/20 footfall was 2.2% down compared to 18/19, this reflects the coronavirus shutdown. At the end of February our YTD figure was +1.3% on previous, and our projection was to end the year at +1.2%. So allowing for exceptional circumstances, performance compared to the previous year was up. Benchmarking against CIPFA statistics, we are in the top quartile for visits, book issues and volunteer hours. Performance graphs may be seen at Annex 1

1.2 The libraries with the biggest increases correspond to those with new buildings such as Tang Hall and new managers such as Strensall and Huntington. We can demonstrate that investment in services delivers improved performance.

1.3 In book issues, numbers were slightly down on the previous year. Again, the numbers were affected by Covid 19 to present a slight downturn. At the end of Feb our YTD position was -1.8% and our end of year projection was -1.9%. A downturn isn't a great result, but set against a picture of national decline, a downturn of less than 2% is positive, especially as our performance is already upper quartile and decreasing by less than the national trend will almost certainly see us reinforce our position in the upper quartile. Ebooks and audio downloads are still issuing well and increasing as we promote the service during the lockdown.

1.4 We are in the top quartile for volunteering hours as well and have the largest number of volunteers amongst the other cultural organisations in the city. Numbers do vary in the archives, depending on the number of large projects we have – for instance, On the Drawing Board required a regular supply of volunteers. We have worked hard to involve our volunteers in service development, holding drop ins so they can speak with senior managers.

1.5 Explore Labs is an Arts Council funded project that completed this year after 3 years of work. It has been a hugely successful project that has won a number of awards including a York Culture Award – for an outstanding cultural project in the city of York - and also an Edge Award – a national award recognising innovative projects in libraries. Explore Labs has been 3 years of experimenting with different art forms with staff developing their confidence in working with artists and creatives. We have completed the final evaluation which is included in our submission. Next

steps are discussing a Labs 2 project that will lead to an NPO submission in the next round.

1.6 The Cultural Leaders Group and the Council have been developing a Culture Strategy. Libraries are a key element of the strategy – they will be centres of culture and creative activity across the city, providing many children with their first experience of culture. We were to hold a workshop with Darren Henley, CEO of the Arts Council, but first the election and now the pandemic have stopped it. Darren remains committed to coming at a future date as he is so excited at what we are achieving in York showcasing libraries as centres of creative and cultural activity.

1.7 Gateways Transition project. We have worked hard developing partnerships with local groups – Parish Councils, Local History Groups, Friends of libraries etc. This work is laying the foundations for successful moves in the future.

1.8 We began the year by investing in our public facing IT equipment. We replaced all the PCs, upgrading the catalogues and setting up the Explore York Images website. This was a major achievement, completed largely when libraries were closed, the public simply had an improved experience. Having up to date equipment makes us more credible with the public and encourages more to come and use our pcs. We conducted a consultation recently to better understand why people use our pcs and how we can continue to develop. There was a positive response showing that there is still a strong demand for the service.

1.9 Two of our libraries celebrated their 50th birthdays – Acomb and Clifton. Our new contract comes with capital funding to improve both of these, so the celebrations were as much looking forward as backwards.

1.10 The Summer Reading Challenge is always a highlight in our year. Every year sees an increase in participants and completers. Acomb Primary School won the award for the third year running. They work with their parents to get all the children involved. We love the Challenge and every member of staff plus our volunteers get involved, talking to the children about the books they have read and encouraging them to choose more. Participating in the Challenge has been proven to improve literacy skills by making reading fun for children. Finding the right book for each child can be the beginning of a lifelong love of reading.

1.11 Explore works in partnership with many organisations to maximise capacity and deliver a range of projects. One example is with Reach – the new partnership that works to bring children and culture together. All the cultural and heritage organisations in York are in this partnership and we are working to create a list of things to do at each age to bring culture and children together.

1.12 Archives – there have been a number of important projects this year. They show the range of subjects and partners that we work with to show the many different collections we hold in this most important archive. Many show the lives of everyday people as well as the rich and powerful.

i) On the Drawing Board – project to catalogue and conserve the many engineering and architects plans. This was done with the council department that still works with these plans. As well as conserving this amazing collection, the work supports work that happens now and in the future

ii) Bridging the Digital Gap – a project with the region's other archives to improve digital skills in archives. The move to digital archives requires new skills

iii) Uncovering York's Sporting Heritage – partnership with York FC and York Knights to catalogue their collections and conserve for the future. This collection will be held at the Community Stadium when it opens

iv) We have developed a close partnership with the Mansion House to showcase our collections to tell the story of York and the Council.

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4. Customer Focus

As a people focussed organisation, the relationship with customers both existing, new and potential is very important. We have developed Customer First standards that provide a foundation on which to build a strong customer connection. Our customers are at the heart of Explore and feedback from the individuals, families and communities of York is important as we develop and shape services. We encourage customer feedback not only for specific projects but on a day to day basis. We listen, respond, monitor and review feedback in order to continually improve the customer experience.

4.1 Customer Feedback: Informal

502 items of customer feedback were recorded between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020: 329 compliments, 56 suggestions and 117 complaints. We replied within the 7 day time limit to all but 4 comments requiring a response.

4.1.1 Compliments – trends and highlights

i) Customer Service

“Libraries are one of the few places you can go to without being looked up and down and then instantly judged. You can go in and be treated the same as everyone no matter what you look like, how much you earn or your reason for being there.”

More than a fifth of all feedback during 2019-20 related to Customer Service. Customers paid tribute to the welcoming and warm atmosphere, inclusive and accessible environment, and to kind and knowledgeable staff who were always willing to go the extra mile.

ii) Children

“I feel so secure and relaxed when I bring my little ones in the library! I haven't found any other place in York that can make me feel like this. Thank God for the library- it is a gift for the parents!”

Across the year compliments highlighted the richness of our children's offer: the range and depth of activities for children; the high quality of children's storytime sessions; the enthusiasm and expertise of staff storytellers; the power of children's activities from novel writing to Lego Club to motivate and give confidence to children; the Summer and Bloodaxe reading challenges; children using the Archives; targeted work with babies and young mums from HomeStart.

iii) Events and General

Customers appreciate the range and quality of events for all ages offered by Explore. The newest buildings at New Earswick and Tang Hall continued to receive special praise during the year, with much affection shown for other libraries too. A change of managers gave new life to libraries at Huntington and Strensall with many positive comments. Customers commented often on how local libraries contribute to their quality of life, helping them to feel less lonely and isolated.

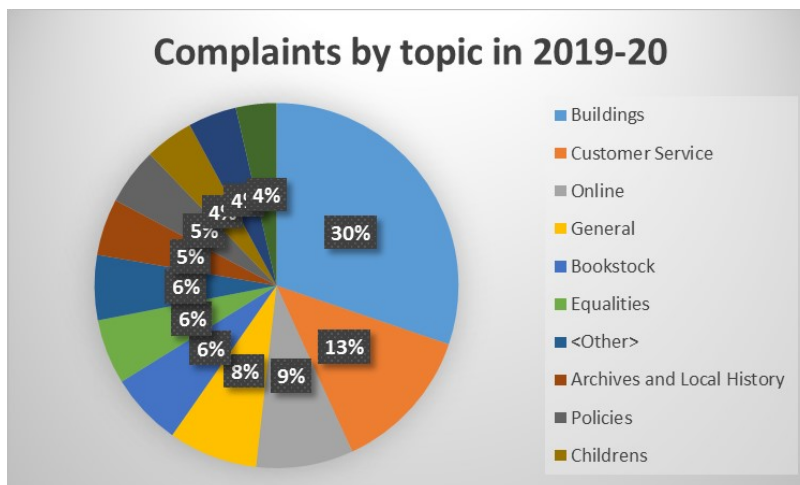
"The building is amazing! The views too, and also it makes me feel safe that there is a positive presence in the community. Also I live on my own, so it is nice to pop in for a coffee."

4.1.2 Suggestions

- Customer suggestions are reviewed monthly by Explore's Strategic and Operational Management Teams. Where feasible, suggestions are acted on immediately or added to development and improvement plans. Customers are kept informed of changes made through "You Said, We Did" communications on-site and online. Where we do not act on customer suggestions we always respond giving an explanation of the reasons for our decision.
- We made a number of changes to buildings and procedures following customer suggestions. These included **improving accessibility** at York Explore by increasing blue badge parking time, and making spaces within the building easier for wheelchair users. **Sanitary waste collection** was increased at Tang Hall in response to customer suggestions. We introduced a **Radio 4 booklist** on the library catalogue. We are **reducing single use plastic** in our cafes.

- Other suggestions are being considered in our forward planning; a green alternative to plastic York cards; noise mitigation at Tang Hall and York; new external signage at Fulford; improvements to the toilets at York.

4.1.3 Complaints



All customer complaints are reviewed monthly by Strategic and Operational Management Teams and added to improvement plans if they cannot be resolved immediately. Trends and common themes in complaints are below:

- i) Buildings are the most common subject of complaint, with the condition of **toilets** within those buildings comprising a large proportion of the complaints, and in particular the decorative state of the toilets at York: In response to this, the refurbishment and improvement of the toilets at York is a priority for us at the beginning of this next financial year. Staff act quickly to deal with issues where they can: a good example is increasing the sanitary bin collections at Tang Hall and York. Other complaints about buildings relate to **noise levels** (particularly in the larger libraries) and **signage**: managers have acted on these complaints, and where they could not be resolved immediately, have put in place temporary measures to mitigate the problems.
- ii) Customer service complaints rarely refer to discourtesy or poor communication by members of staff and such occurrences are

immediately addressed by line managers. Complaints sometimes result from temporary malfunction of online renewal or RFID machines which are resolved quickly on being reported. Delayed replies to emails and answerphone messages were another cause of complaint and reminders are issued to staff on Explore's agreed customer standards for reply times.

- iii) Other substantive complaints related to various **online** problems (these were temporary and were quickly resolved by the e-services librarian), the range of **book stock**, and **equalities** issues such as accessibility for wheelchair users and people with visual impairments which were resolved by local managers.

4.2 Customer Feedback: formal consultation

4.2.1 Annual User Survey

In 2019-20 we focused on people who use PCs in our libraries.

The PC user survey found an overall satisfaction score of 7.6 (out of 10) and resulted in some complimentary feedback, so was very positive overall. It was a useful exercise in getting to understand our user base and their priorities. Since last time the survey was run the perception of speed and cleanliness has improved, which was good because these were the two strongest themes emerging last time. We learned this time that the single biggest reason that people use library PCs instead of a home PC is for printing. Printing was also the most frequent subject of free text comments. This served as a strong reminder that printing needs to be smooth and reliable and should be our primary focus. We had already identified the unreliability of our printing solutions and this survey confirmed that, so our intention is re-procurement in 20/21. The survey was useful in offering some practical suggestions we have been able to take forward to improve the facilities for everyone, for example our merchandising team are looking to source headphones for sale, and the ICT department are looking into SD card readers. It was a very worthwhile exercise, and the results are covered in Annex 4

Feedback supplied as part of the survey was collated and shared with OMT and individual library managers for consideration and implementation of actions where applicable.

4.2.2 Access4All group

In February this year, a group of young people with learning disabilities and special needs, supported by Laura Brown (SEN Local Offer and Participation officer), were invited to visit York Explore to assess the customer experience and support available for people with additional needs. Areas covered in the inspection included accessibility, the availability of quiet spaces, the ambient noise and staff helpfulness. The visit also included a discussion and interview with Janet Edge, Team Leader at York Explore.

The findings outlined in the report were shared with staff and additional support will be provided as part of staff development. Recommendations for physical changes to the building will be considered for implementation as we make improvements to the building. The report will be shared with OMT to ensure a service wide focus on the key learning points.

The Inspection report is attached at Annex 5

4.2.3 Customer First Standards Audit

Explore has developed Customer First Standards that provide a foundation on which to build a strong customer connection. Customer First is a key part of the induction for every member of staff, at all levels. It also forms part of agreements with partners who deliver activity on behalf of Explore or from our buildings.

The standards have been developed in consultation with staff and focus on the customer journey experience in Explore physical spaces and virtually. The standards provide consistency across Explore, so that the customer experience is excellent, every library, every visit.

An annual audit is carried out to assess performance against the standards and improvement action plans are developed, discussed at OMT and with managers and frontline staff so as to ensure continual improvement and customer focus.

In 2019 the audit average score was 89%. Areas for improvement have been developed as an action plan by managers in discussion with staff.

5. Community Engagement

As an organisation that brings people and communities together, connecting with and listening to those communities is important to us to inform the decisions we make strategically as an organisation. We do that formally as we develop new services, we listen and adapt our offer to reflect community need, and informally, via our network of community members, volunteers and Friends groups. These groups are committed and invested in supporting Explore to deliver a quality library and archive service.

5.1 Friends Groups

5.1.1 We began the year with 7 Friends groups and this year, Huntington Library Friends Group folded due to the age of key members, length of tenure and no successors to maintain the group, despite numerous attempts by the group to recruit. A refreshed Huntington Friends, along with new groups at Strensall and a Friends of the Folk Hall group, which sees supporting the library service as one element of, will be developed this coming year and is in the annual service plan for 2020/21. Fulford was the only new Friends groups established this year, which has now been operational for 6 months, maintaining our total of 7 Friends groups supporting Explore. Our aim is to have a Friends group supporting each of our Library Gateways by the end of March 2021.

5.1.2 All groups have continued to plan and hold events to fundraise for Explore and the local library itself – donating funds to enable Explore to plan and deliver activities to support the Summer Reading Challenge in local libraries, as well as funding and supporting the upkeep of local libraries – from refurbishing toilets at Poppleton Library to painting the walls and buying new pieces of display furniture at Dunnington. Friends groups determine their funding priorities as led by the local library manager, as directed by the 5 year maintenance schedule, thus reducing the financial burden on the organisation by supporting the costs of very minor repairs and decorative maintenance. This will continue to be the aim and purpose of the Friends groups going forward.

5.1.3 Friends groups had, and continue to have, a critical role to play as key stakeholders in the development and delivery of Explores asset management strategy this year, by influencing the high level options appraisal which details alternatives for library locations in each community, through to advocating locally

about the proposed library locations. Much of the engagement and consultation activity with Friends groups this year focussed on discussions and ideas sharing around either proposed alternative locations for libraries, or library developments that were already in train.

5.2 Volunteers

5.2.1 Explore's volunteer total sits at around 700 people regularly volunteering their time to support the achievement of the organisations aims and objectives. This is less individuals than the previous year, but is still representing the same number of hours and operationally. This year, as well as recruiting new volunteers via a reworked, streamlined process, we have also focussed more on developing and retaining the people who already volunteer for us. This reduced number of people volunteering but covering the same hours will be a reflection on that work – we have created new roles for our more experienced, established and 'trusted' volunteers which gives them extra responsibility, enables them to develop their skills and provides more capacity for the paid staff in the organisation and this will be a model we continue to develop to release staff more and more from 'admin' based tasks to focus on the added value of more customer focussed activity.

5.2.2 Explore has a seat round the table supporting the delivery of the City's Cultural Strategy, having a role on a working party consisting of members of key cultural organisations who deliver their services supported by volunteers and whose aim is to deliver on the volunteering arm of the Culture Strategy – creating cultural ambassadors and widening participation in cultural activity across the city. A small city wide action plan has been developed, with the aim of reaching more targeting groups and local communities to support the delivery of the work of those key cultural organisations, as well as pooling talent and resources from the collected organisations – sharing best practice and developing one clear volunteer path. This coming year will see the groups work through the action plan, with increased collaborative working across the sector to improve the volunteer experience in all key organisations.

5.3 Community Members

75 new community members were added to and 4 members were removed from the register during 2019-20. There were a total of 717 community members on 31 March 2020.

5.3.1 Recruitment of members. All library staff are briefed about community membership during their induction, and are able to talk to customers about how and why they should consider becoming a community member. Leaflets about community membership are on display in all Explore venues, and are included in the packs of information used at pop-up events,

5.3.2 Engagement. We stay in contact with members through regular emails about significant developments in the life of the organisation and all members receive a letter inviting them to the Annual General meeting (AGM), though attendance at the AGM in September 2019 was very low with only 12 community members participating. Since many community members are also volunteering or members of Friends groups, it is likely that many feel they engage with Explore through their activities, and regard their community membership as just another way of showing support.

5.3.3 We recognise that Community Members can act as powerful advocates for Explore in York and beyond, and our Board is keen to increase both the numbers of people joining and engagement with existing members. Promotional campaigns focusing on recruitment are planned in Q1 and Q3 2020-21. We will continue to increase engagement through email and are planning a more engaging format for the 2020 AGM, Covid regulations permitting.

5.4 Community Consultation

Various sessions/discussions/presentations held with key stakeholders in all communities across the City this financial year around the asset management strategy and the future libraries investment programme which sees the co-location of libraries with other key community venues – more in the update below regarding the transitions programme.

5.5 Hungate Reading Café consultation

Our more formal engagement this year focussed on the development of the reading café at Hungate.

5.5.1 Over 3 consecutive weeks, we presented our vision to the residents of the Hungate community in the City Centre – sharing our initial thoughts on what our offer may be for that particular locality. Over 50 people came to speak to us – to share what they would like to see, set out their expectations and needs in terms of how we could support, form and help bring together those individuals that collectively form a new community. We listened, further developed our plans and know we have a community ready both to support and who will actively support us when the new reading café opens, complete with volunteers from within the Hungate development ready to add value and connect with other residents.

5.6 Explore Annual Programme of Events and Activities 2019-2020

The events and activities programme across Explore provides opportunities for all age groups, individuals, families and communities to connect, to learn, to be creative and to challenge imaginations. Both planned and unplanned events throughout the year attract existing and new audiences, encourage repeat visits and wider usage of services and contribute to income. We proactively support and promote key national programmes, such as LGBTQ History month, Mental Health Awareness Week, the Summer Reading Challenge, Fun Palaces to name just a few. In addition, we support key local events and festivals such as Festival of Ideas, Bloodaxe Reading Challenge and the Residents Festival. In addition, we provide a daily/weekly programme of events and activities for all ages including craft clubs, Lego clubs and activities for under 5s such as rhyme times. Please see Annex 6 for the Annual Events plan in full.

5.6.1 We adopt a reactive response in our approach to unplanned events, by providing venues and support for partner organisations to help them to reach a wider audience and meet key priorities. Examples include York Developers Tech Fest and Extinction Rebellion people's assembly.

5.6.2 Last year Explore facilitated over 890 activities for adults with 10,621 participants. A total of 32,352 children attended 2,140 activities and in addition we

hosted 333 visits for schools and pre-school settings. We delivered all of the activities in the Events Plan with the exception of:

- Reading Pictures Seeing Stories in February (this was dependent on regional funding which was unsuccessful)
- York Fashion Week
- York Literature Festival

(Both of the above were due in March and were either cancelled or postponed due to the Coronavirus emergency).

5.6.3 Supporting key priorities. The range of events support the delivery of key objectives such as - activities which improve literacy, support well-being, provide opportunities to explore creativity and learning, increase digital confidence, bring communities together and reduce isolation and loneliness. The following key highlights demonstrate how our events programme support priorities and benefit individuals and communities.

i) Reading

- A key feature in the calendar for Explore is the Summer Reading Challenge and 2019 was no exception. In total 3484 children and young people took part in the challenge with a total of 59,733 books being borrowed over this period. As well as the reading challenge itself, we always provide a wide range of activities, at low cost or no cost, to keep children engaged and to support families through the summer holiday period. With the theme the Space Chase – the exciting activities ranged from making space crafts, galaxy slime making workshops, space Lego robotics, creating mini films, interactive story times inspired by the archival material from Goodricke and Piggott (astronomers) collection and a space chase hack camp. The final evaluation report is at Annex 7 and includes feedback from parents and participants and the experience of one of the many young volunteers who supported the Challenge.
- As there was no Big City Read in 2019, we focused instead on showcasing the Explore offer through the wide range of autumn events bringing it together under the banner Not the Big City Read. Reading for pleasure was a key component and we hosted a number of high profile author events during this period.

ii) Health, Well-being and creativity

- Our events programme focuses on national initiatives such as Dementia Action week, Mental Health Awareness, Health Information week, National Volunteer week. We work with partner organisations to showcase the York response as well as highlighting the work of Explore, including Reading Well (books to support health and wellbeing) and the benefits of volunteering, contributing to a sense of well-being.
- We are part of the Cultural Well-being partnership chaired by CYC and includes many of the cultural organisations in York. As a member of this partnership we have been involved in supporting well-being social prescribing projects, delivered through the Explore Labs project. A good example of this is the Wellbeing Café Arts Taster Sessions – a series of ‘have a go’ art workshops in partnership with Dementia Forward and held at the Dementia Forward Wellbeing Café. To evaluate the benefits to health and wellbeing participants were asked to rate their current mood by selecting a representative colour from the Manchester Colour Wheel (a recognised evaluation tool).

Before the sessions participants chose:
Negative colours – 16%
Neutral colours – 84%
Positive colours – 0%
After the sessions participants chose:
Negative colours – 4%
Neutral colours – 73%
Positive colours – 23%

iii) Explore Labs

- This was the final year of the Arts Council funded Explore Labs project. Over the 3 years of the project 8,697 participants, involving adults, children, toddlers, older people, families and young people all challenged their imaginations. 82 local, emerging, established and international artists were involved, 36 community arts and cultural organisations and 56 community groups, schools, learning and educational institutions.

- A meaningful accolade for Explore Labs came in February this year. As we were recognised as an innovative Library Service, as winners of the prestigious Edinburgh Edge 2020 award: Social category.
- The final project report is attached at Annex 8.

6. Marketing and Communications

Throughout the year we have delivered a varied programme of events and activities according to the agreed Events Plan and we have achieved everything we set out to do. Exceptions to this were those events due in March which were cancelled or postponed due to the coronavirus emergency.

For 2019, we submitted an overarching audience development document [REDACTED] and have focused our opportunities for marketing on the events plan. All events have been shared on social media, both from the Explore and Explore Archives accounts and of individual libraries.

6.1 Promotional Campaigns

6.1.1 All Explore activities are promoted via print posters in libraries, through our website, social media accounts, regular on-air book group for Radio York, and through our e-mail newsletters. We also promote Explore where appropriate on partner websites/e-newsletters such as Live Well, University of York, and York Mumbler. We have delivered a number of promotional campaigns throughout the year.

- i) The Summer Reading Challenge: a key activity for Explore. This included a printed brochure, posters, press releases and information sharing with partner organisations for onward sharing, notably York Mumbler, Little Vikings, as well as radio and York TV interviews. Visits to 45 primary schools provided the opportunity to promote the challenge to children and deliver the events brochure for every child to take home. Every event was shared on social media (Facebook and Twitter).
- ii) Live in Libraries and the Nuisance Inspector. The highly successful Live in Libraries programmed throughout the autumn as part of Explore Labs. It was an opportunity to showcase York Explore as a performance space with a series of live music performances attracting international artists and the highly successful Nuisance Inspector audio drama production – these events were mainly promoted through social media achieving 1900+ impressions and were fully subscribed.

- iii) Residents Festival and York card. We delivered a major campaign during January and February to promote York Card sales in the lead up to the Residents Festival which continued through to February half-term. As well as promoting through the usual channels, we also organised pop-up marketing events targeting City of York Council employees. We saw an increase of York Card sales above target in the period.

- iv) Although the coronavirus emergency has had a serious impact on our ability to deliver a physical service in a physical space it has also provided an opportunity to assess our virtual offer and to widen its use through promotion. In March press releases were sent out regularly as the situation with coronavirus unfolded, to promote Explore’s existing online services and new resources. We saw an immediate surge in new memberships, and enquiries from existing customers who wanted to take advantage of the online services. In the first few weeks usage of our e-books (equates to both e-books and e-audio books) was:

New users + 240%
Issues +51%

6.2 Learning points

We have recognised that the existing Audience Development Plan [REDACTED] inadequately reflects how we will develop new audiences. We have worked on and submitted the Audience Development Plan for 2020-21. This Audience Development Plan is aligned to the events plan, with specific success measure which we will report against. National campaigns will be used as a platform to showcase the Explore offer where appropriate. In addition, we will target specific areas to raise awareness including: Explore Reading cafes, York Card, volunteer recruitment, Community Members recruitment and Donations.

7. Future libraries investment programme – Transition plan and Capital works

Following significant engagement with key stakeholders throughout the year (including ward councillors, parish councillors, local library Friends groups, volunteers, community groups, customers and key City of York Council departments), Explore's Asset Management strategy and action plan detailing a high level options appraisal for all 14 sites was developed and then agreed by Explore's Board in January. The Asset Management strategy and the action plan detail Explore's approach to delivering the requirement to co-locate each library with community partners. [REDACTED]

Significant developments towards the action plan are summarised as follows:

- 7.1 **Haxby** Following various meetings held throughout the year with Haxby Scouts, the development opportunity at the Scout HQ located next to Ethel Ward Playing Fields in Haxby fell through over legal issues and concerns. Explore are now working with preferred option no.3, Oaken Grove Community Centre. A temporary library service is expected to be delivered from Oaken Grove from summer 2020, with a longer term solution operational within the next 2/3 years.
- 7.2 **Poppleton.** Following a meeting of ward and parish councillors and members of Poppleton Friends Group, a presentation was delivered to the Trustees of The Poppleton Centre in January formally requesting they consider a partnership with Poppleton Library to relocate the library to The Centre. Explore is now actively pursuing option no.1 on the options appraisal to relocate the library to partner with The Poppleton Centre. Work this coming financial year will focus on options to fund the transition.
- 7.3 **Acomb and Clifton.** A project management team was formed to support the work from City of York Council's perspective and a project plan developed and agreed with a timescale which sees both redeveloped libraries operational by end financial year 2022/23. An attempt to reduce the high level options appraisal for each site to 2/3 options by mid-April, was halted

by the situation with the coronavirus. The commitment still remains to continue with the schedule as planned.

7.4 Other Capital Works – 5 year maintenance plan

A 5 year maintenance schedule detailing both Explore's and City of York Council's responsibilities was agreed autumn 2019 [REDACTED]

Explore has delivered on some of those planned actions this year, with some support from local Friends groups as follows:

1. Interior redecoration of meeting rooms at Acomb Explore
2. Interior redecoration of Dunnington Library
3. Roof repairs at Acomb Explore
4. Roof repairs at York Explore
5. Internal redecoration following roof repairs at York Explore
6. Improvement of toilet facilities at Poppleton Library
7. Improvement of toilet facilities at Dringhouses Library
8. Internal redecoration at Bishopthorpe library
9. Customer lift replacement at York Explore

Other actions will need to be carried over into the next financial year due to in year changes to the budget – these are mostly cosmetic improvements. Further significant pieces of work that had been scheduled to take part this year have had specifications and quotes received later than anticipated, which delayed the actual work itself from being actioned, but is now scheduled to take place this coming financial year. This includes major repairs to rotten window frames at both Bishopthorpe and Huntington libraries and roof repairs to Dringhouses library.

8. Operations

8.1 Facilities Management (including cleaning)

A new 2 year contract was signed and entered into with City of York Council to deliver Facilities Management services across all buildings in Explore. The FM contract has CYC acting as sub-contract managers, providing schedules to support the planned and mandatory maintenance of all of Explore's buildings and organising reactive maintenance if any there are issues (including access to 24hr emergency support). This contract will be under review this coming financial year. There have been no issues with the contract this year and no significant unexpected building issues have been identified. All minor issues raised as part of annual services/inspections have been actioned and dealt with across all sites.

Cleaning services are contracted to Britsafe for all Explore buildings. There have been no issues with this contract, which is subject to annual review.

8.2 Health and Safety

A new 2 year contract has been signed and entered into with City of York Council to deliver Health and Safety services which provides Explore staff with access to guidance and notes related to safe ways of working, training, advice and bi-annual health and safety audits completed for each of our buildings. There have been no issues with this service this year and no major failings identified in Explore's processes as a result of the audits. Refresher training and training for new staff re fire warden and first aid training is planned for this coming financial year.

There have been no major incidents relating to either public or staff safety this year and no RIDDORS. An analysis of all of our incidents finds no significant patterns in failings and are mostly one-off accidents other than recurring spates of anti-social behaviour at our 3 key sites (Acomb, Tang Hall and York). These have all been handled locally, with support from external partners and stakeholders, but continue to be a concern to us as an organisation and we maintain a watching brief.

8.3 Opening Hours – Summary of the year

8.3.1 [REDACTED]

8.3.2 Whilst the majority of our service has remained open as per our planned opening hours schedule, the 2 services operating from vehicles have been impacted by mechanical issues that have seen a significant disruption in service delivery. 2888In particular, the mobile library has been off the road a quarter of the year due to repair after repair being required and failed MOTs. The vehicle is now 20 years old, at the end of its life and needs replacing. The Haxby mobile, whilst not as bad, has been off the road 15% of the time, primarily due to battery issues. These have since been replaced (just before the summer) and service has stabilised. The nature of the vehicles mean that service is immediately disrupted during MOT and service times and this is managed by those tests happening during closed days (once a fortnight for the mobile and every Thursday for Haxby mobile) but the age of the mobile vehicle in particular means that we are generally now off the road a whole week in order to pass an MOT. Our mitigation is that we are aiming to move off the mobile in Haxby, to release that newer, better quality vehicle for the mobile library service. We should see this operational in summer 2020.

8.3.3 And finally, the whole service has been impacted by the government decision to close libraries as a result of the coronavirus as of Saturday 21st March. As Explore, both our customers and staff were very clear that we remained open as long as we possibly could to support those who really need our services and that's what we did – remaining open as long as we possibly could throughout the month of March. Although usage across all libraries rapidly declined throughout March, the service was nevertheless used and welcome, with staff reporting daily that by remaining open we were providing a 'lifeline' to those more vulnerable in our communities. The very end of the year saw Acomb and Clifton Explore Centres opening as community hubs, staffed by Explore and City of York Council staff, supported by a team of volunteers delivering emergency food and support to those isolated and in need during the outbreak of the virus.

9. Book stock

9.1 Stock Inventory

These figures have been collated using CIPFA definitions to ensure consistency over time. Stock counts for 19/20 are correct on 31 March 2019.

	19/20 inventory	18/19 inventory	Up/Down on last year
Reference Books	19982	19917	0%
Lending Adult Fiction	50957	54429	-6%
Lending Adult Nonfiction	45635	48163	-5%
Lending Junior Fiction	33582	35761	-6%
Lending Junior Nonfiction	8337	7997	4%
Reserve Books (in transit, in reserve etc.)	35399	39743	-11%
Total lending book stock	138511	146350	-5%
Total book stock	193892	206010	-6%
Reference Audiovisual	0	0	
Lending Adult audiobooks	3855	3813	1%
Lending Children's audiobooks	819	837	-2%
Lending AV (DVDs, language packs)	79	88	-10%
E-books	5044	4955	2%
E newspapers, emagazines, ecomics	0	0	
E-Audio and e-audiovisuals	2122	1626	31%
Music streaming	0	0	
Hardware	39	39	0%
Reserve AV (in transit, in reserve etc.)	480	654	-27%
Total lending AV	11958	11358	5%
Total AV	12438	12012	4%
Total Stock	206330	218022	-5%
Toys (outside CIPFA inventory)	227	199	14%

The collection with the biggest increase is e-audiobooks. This is the only collection with very little natural wastage – we don't lose stock through it getting worn out, stolen or kept overdue, so the size grows over time as books are added. This is not true to the same extent with ebooks where licences are often on temporary terms (e.g. two years).

Reserve stock is a CIPFA definition including anything in our collection which isn't currently available to the public. We aim to allow public access to almost all the books, so this total may seem high but is not excessive compared to other authorities. The majority (72%) are long overdues, which we haven't yet given up on recovering so we keep them on the system such that they can quickly go back into stock if they are returned. Also included are items in transit between branches on 31 March 2019 (14%), items in storage for retrieval by staff only (reading group sets 4% and reserves 3%); and items in temporary storage for the new branches at Hungate and the Stadium (7%).

9.2 Stock Turn

This is a measure of how hard the stock works – average issues per item per year.

	19/20 inventory	19/20 issues	Explore Stock turn 19/20	Upper quartile threshold in 18/19
Lending Adult Fiction	50957	272022	5.3	4.9
Lending Adult Nonfiction	45635	151229	3.3	2.7
Lending Junior Fiction	33582	211604	6.3	5.5
Lending Junior Nonfiction	8337	36116	4.3	3.0
Total lending book stock	138511	670971	4.8	4.2
Lending Adult audiobooks	3855	15978	4.1	2.5
Lending Children's audiobooks	819	3136	3.8	2.3
Lending AV (DVDs, language packs)	79	286	3.6	1.2
E-books	5044	22315	4.4	2.0
E-audiobooks	2122	22832	10.8	5.0

Explore’s stock turn figures are usually upper quartile, and when the 19/20 comparative figures are published by CIPFA it’s very likely this 19/20 performance will be upper quartile again.

We examine stock turn regularly through the year, broken down into scores of sub-categories, and aim for a stock turn around 6 or 7. Generally a high figure is positive, although a figure over 10 suggests that we can’t keep enough stock on the shelves to fulfil demand and need more stock in that area.

Since the calculation divides issues throughout 19/20 by the inventory on the final day, it gives a misleading figure if collections have radically grown or shrunk through the year. This is the case with e-audiobooks where the collection size at end of year was greater than the average collection size throughout the year. So the true stock turn for e-audiobooks would be higher than 10.8. This collection has been identified for further investment in 20/21.

9.3 Stock acquired, purchased and retired

19/20 total stock including books, AV, reference and toys	18/19 total stock including books, AV, reference and toys	Up/Down on last year	Up/Down on last year as %	All 19/20 acquisitions including purchases and donations	19/20 acquisitions - purchases only	Retired stock 19/20
206557	218022	-11465	-5%	20004	15090	31469

In 19/20 we accessioned fewer items than we de-accessioned, so the overall stock size fell by 5%. The retired stock column covers stock which is withdrawn for any reason, this may be library staff withdrawing out of date items, damage, loss/theft, or items not returned by customers.

In terms of acquisitions, the stock team review our usage statistics regularly to inform decisions about stock budget allocation. In 19/20 the funding for eaudiobooks was increased and funding for physical audiobooks was decreased, such that they were approximately equal for the first time, in line with changing demand. We also added a new foreign language collection to the elibrary, and withdraw an online encyclopaedia which was getting low usage. Early in 2020 there was a successful promotional campaign appealing for targeted donations.

10. Benchmarking

We benchmark our library performance against other unitary authorities every year using statistics published by CIPFA. Over time fewer authorities are submitting their statistics for collation, but around 41 of 54 unitary authorities have figures listed for the measures we're focussing on, which is sufficient to give a useful picture.

Note this table covers comparative performance for 18/19, the figures for which were released mid 19/20.

	York 18/19	Unitary Average 18/19	Quartile Position 18/19	Note
Visits for Library Purposes, per 1000 population	4982	3148	Q1 (upper quartile)	
All stock issues, per 1000 population	3629	3101	Q1 (upper quartile)	
Book Issues, per 1000 population	3344	2672	Q1 (upper quartile)	Specifically books, not ebooks or audiobooks or toys
Book stock, per 1000 population	981	1141	Q3 (below median but not bottom quartile)	
Book Acquisitions, per 1000 population	84	98	Q3 (below median but not bottom quartile)	
PC use in hours, per 1000 population	278	323	Q3 (below median but not bottom quartile)	We suspect that being an early wifi adopter, in a relatively affluent region, our wifi use would be higher along with our PC use being lower, but wifi figures are not available.
Staff in post, per 1000 population	0.27	0.21	Q1 (upper quartile)	We may be unusual in directly employing café staff
Library (not Archives) Volunteer Hours, per 1000 population	101.3	28.0	Q1 (upper quartile)	

Requests, per 1000 population	245	170	Q1 (upper quartile)
% requests supplied within 30 days	77%	84%	Q4 (bottom quartile)

10.1 The following table provides footfall at the busiest libraries in the UK 18/19. Some caution is required since a minority of authorities don't share their figures, and each authority only has one "busiest library" so authorities with two major cities will not have their second city listed. None-the-less, it provides a picture of how York Explore compares to other city libraries.

	Visits 18/19 for busiest library in each authority	Top fifty library name
1	1,891,135	Central, Manchester
2	1,606,077	Wembley
3	1,226,105	Woolwich
4	922,146	Jubilee
5	910,704	Croydon Central
6	873,441	Norfolk and Norwich Millennium
7	821,579	Chester
8	710,800	Worcester - The Hive
9	660,298	Forum, Southend-on-Sea
10	651,295	Redbridge Central
11	649,652	City Library, Newcastle
12	609,724	Barking
13	600,393	Walthamstow
14	595,855	Winchester DC
15	592,880	Central, Dundee
16	579,550	Harlow
17	562,769	Oxfordshire County
18	560,688	Exeter
19	555,834	Wood Green
20	546,686	Llanelli
21	540,529	Oldham
22	526,830	Idea Store Whitechapel

23	521,191	Mitchell
24	510,747	Hackney Central
25	468,787	Central, Edinburgh
26	468,103	North Shields
27	461,400	Edmonton Green
28	457,790	Cambridge Central
29	435,617	Canada Water
30	428,604	East Ham
31	412,422	Bolton Central
32	409,646	York
33	400,596	Bristol Central
34	385,424	Central, Sheffield
35	384,646	Bromley Central
36	378,045	Grays
37	365,268	Durham Clayport
38	360,679	Salisbury
39	359,950	Chipping Barnet
40	357,181	Downham
41	356,583	Central, Coventry
42	354,471	Wimbledon
43	354,025	Nottingham Central
44	352,056	Lowestoft
45	348,520	The Curve, Slough
46	341,856	Wishaw
47	336,575	Wolverhampton Central
48	317,032	Crawley
49	315,462	Aberdeen Central
50	313,186	Cheltenham

10.2 For Archives, benchmarking isn't done in the same way as there is so much variation between services there is very little point of comparison in statistics. However, we do pay close attention to how our service is performing relative to others and we have a good understanding of our strengths and areas for improvement. We know that our outreach and engagement is exemplary and was noted by The National Archives at our 2018 peer review. We also know that we have a wider variety of service users than most other services – a recent Archives for Yorkshire Report recently showed that a vast majority of Archives service users are over 60, whereas for us a large proportion of users are students and academics. We know that we need to get more of our collections catalogued and available to the public, and we'd like to get more of our collections available in a digital form as well for remote access.

11. Archives and Local History report

11.1 Collections Highlights

41.1% of archives held are publicly available on the catalogue. Here are a few highlights from this year.

- **Edna Crichton** is a particularly significant collection as she was one of the first women elected to City of York Council in 1919, and then was the city's first Lord Mayor at the time of the Baedeker Raid in 1942.
- **Frederick Bell** collection is a rare example of the output of a local architect in the middle of the 19th century (it is all from the 1840s). Some are his own architectural drawings, but equally a large percentage of the collection is what would be classified as scale sketches – it's a very visual collection.
- **York Hoboes Rambling Club** contains a lot of photographs from the 1930s onwards. This links really well with the National Lottery Heritage Funded project looking at York's sporting history as part of the development at the Community Stadium, also a key priority for both CYC and Explore is health and wellbeing being. This collection provides a great visual example.
- *On the Drawing Board* is the most significant in terms of volume and the outcome of a funded project. It has proved to be very popular and captured the imagination and interest in the way it has been presented in key themes, the York we all know, the York that never was and the York that has been lost. Because of the visual nature of the plans, people are able to engage and discuss collective and individual memories of the city. During 2020 Resident's weekend, the plans were exhibited at the Mansion House, supported by volunteers who had been involved in cataloguing the collection, this engaged a wide and diverse audience. As well as general interest as described, the collection has already proved to be an important addition for professional use by colleagues in CYC.

11.2 List of new collections added this year



11.3 Engagement

i) Creative interpretation

The Archive has provided a rich resource for artists and creatives to delve, and re-interpret in imaginative ways that really capture the imagination. A great example of this is *The Nuisance Inspector* – a live audio drama by playwright and director Paul Birch. Based on the story of the Hungate clearances and inspired by letters, maps, books and photographs from the internationally significant Past Caring archives. The sell-out show used drama, comedy and live music to transport audiences into a powerful and poignant past. The Q & A session with the Civic Archivist following each performance was full of interesting questions and anecdotes of Hungate from members of the audience. There were four performances with a total of 240 people attending. The performance has garnered interest from The Reading Agency and The National Archive.

“As a writer being invited to use the archive proved to be an inspirational treasure trove. The evocative images and incredible documents offered an abundance of potential stories. Using the archive helped us not only create a powerful show but one filled with unusual authenticity....”


Paul Birch, writer and director *The Nuisance Inspector*

ii) Explore York Images

This year we have moved the image library - Imagine York - to a new managed image platform which provides greater flexibility in presentation – Explore York Images. We are able to upload and edit new images, and develop themes to support users with searching the site. We will market throughout the year as part of our audience development plan for 2020/21.

11.4 Report on progress for move from provisional to full Archive Service Accreditation

The provisional award was achieved in March 2018 for a period of two years. Explore has submitted information outlining how we have made progress against required actions as identified in the outcome letter for Archive Service Accreditation, in support of the move to full accreditation. This will be assessed by the accreditation panel in July 2020.



12. Contract Delivery

We confirm that Explore has met the delivery requirements for the contract. Any failures during March 2020 are due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Fiona Williams, Chief Executive, Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Limited

