



Annual Report

1 April 2022- 31 March 2023

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 Jenny Layfield, Chief Executive

Overview

In a city of approximately 200,000 residents Explore has an impressive array of statistics. We had 724,717 visits to our libraries and 79,118 engagements (self-directed and staff led) engagements with our Archives. We provided over 2,571 events attended by 39,578 people. We recruited 10,628 new members, saw 430,712 visits to our website and our volunteers gave us over 18,914 hours of their time equivalent to around £250,000 of staff time.

This second “post-pandemic” year has clearly demonstrated the value we provide in supporting our communities with new challenges. The role of libraries in improving literacy, digital skills and health and wellbeing in communities have been even more important as our communities have moved from a pandemic into a cost-of-living crisis. Day to day we have supported our communities through provision of warm and safe places and working closely with our partners to ensure they receive the support they need. This is evidenced throughout this report.

Our organisational resilience was strengthened in October by the appointment of 2 new non-executive directors, both with experience in the culture sector, in addition to the 2 new community directors appointed at our AGM in in September. The appointment of my role in January now puts us in an excellent position to focus on organisational growth and sustainability as we begin the new financial year.

Our financial resilience has been tested with the inflationary increases that have been seen dramatic increase in all our costs but most notably in heat and light, made more challenging by our desire to be warm spaces for our communities, however we have continued with the sound financial prudence that we have demonstrated over the past four years to ensure we have ended this year with an operational profit.

We continue to think innovatively, as demonstrated by the fantastic news in November that we would be an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation, one of only 16 library services across the country. This is a brilliant accolade for us and recognises our reputation as a provider of high-quality cultural experiences across all of our communities.

DCMS announced the development of a new strategy for libraries and Explore hosted a visit in the autumn by Baroness Sanderson, who leads the strategy and was accompanied by a DCMS representative. As well as giving information about our mutual model, we were challenged to feed back to DCMS about how they can help us put libraries front of centre to get the message across that libraries are one of the solutions to issues facing both local and national government.

Explore for York: How we supported city-wide priorities

The literacy attainment gap

This year's Summer Reading Challenge Gadgeteers was launched in July and ran throughout the school summer holidays with the aim on supporting the continued attainment of literacy levels. We had 2998 participants, with 152 taking part from nurseries in targeted areas. To ensure our activities and events remained accessible for all families, for the first time we had a range of free and/or pay as you feel events, so everyone was able to attend, regardless of their financial situation.

Our work bringing people together to share the joy of reading continued in the autumn following the successful launch of the Big City Read, Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* at the end of September. We worked with partners and other cultural providers to bring audiences together around the themes of the book. The programme ranged from traditional author events and pop-up readers' groups across all libraries and reading cafes, to theatre performances in libraries and targeted work with residents of The Groves area of the York where much of the book is set. A total of 679 people took part in 40 events, with many more engaging with the book.

In our work on early years development, a priority focus for Early Talk for York is to extend their work to focus on targeted areas where more help and support is needed to help get children school-ready. We worked with them to launch a Stay and Play session at Acomb, using ward funding.

The Bloodaxe Reading Challenge ran from 26 November 2022 to 28 January 2023. There was an increase of 8.5% of children starting the challenge this year compared to 2021/22, and 46% of children finished the challenge this year compared to 35% in 21/22

York Literature Festival was in March with Explore hosting 7 adult events and a children's day at York Explore and a Small Press Fair at Hungate Reading Café (45 attended and YLF paid for the café to open) as part of York Literature festival 2023 programme.

Digital Inclusion

We secured funding to for a 100% Digital York Partnership coordinator for 18.5hpw for 18 months. Digital Café drop-in sessions were provided in partnership with Keeping Digital at Tang Hall Explore and in community venues in Acomb at Sanderson House and St Wulstan's in Heworth supported by local ward fund. Over the course of the year, we have developed our approach towards a more targeted focus on communities within Acomb, working with community groups and organisations to introduce digital inclusion as a tool to achieve their

aims and to support identified outcomes and impact. We have supported specific groups city-wide, for example supporting food banks with sim cards

We re-focused and developed Explore's digital offer which was launched in Get Online Week in October. Supported by a team of volunteers, we delivered one-to-one and small group sessions on the basics of getting online. We continued to support customers needing one-to-one support to request and access Household Support Fund and Energy Rebate Payments online, with 42 customers supported in Acomb alone.

Access to quality information

We worked with partner organisations to provide communities with local access to specific information, advice and guidance in all of our Explore Centres including National Careers Service, Healthwatch York and Wilberforce Trust. To support sustainability, York Explore launched a climate corner, bringing library resources and City of York staff together as they consulted on the city's climate strategy. This was supported by other partner organisations who provided advice on energy saving and cutting energy bills at home, helping residents cope with the rise in cost of living.

Cohesive communities - Diversity, equality, and inclusion

June saw the launch of Our City Hub for migrants and refugees supported by four 10-hr Co-ordinator posts (funded until end of June 2024). Held every Saturday at York Explore, the hub is supported by 40+ volunteers from migrant communities who speak a variety of different languages. The hub co-ordinates informal sessions supported by formal learning activity/advice sessions and informed by the needs of the communities attending. We have contributed to the welcoming of approx. 400 asylum seekers in York - nearly 270 individuals have already arrived with more expected, of which around 90 are primary-aged children.

Cost of Living

Explore responded to the need to raise awareness of various government funds available to residents to mitigate the cost-of-living increase. We partnered with City of York Council, Citizens Advice York and Age UK to provide one-to-one support to targeted households within the Tang Hall area. Twice a month, the mobile library stops in 2 key locations within Tang Hall, and local residents can hop on and work with Citizens Advice staff to access the financial support they are entitled to. So far, we have supported 15 residents over 3 visits. We have also held a number of free or low-cost activities over the quarter including live music, and theatre. Every library hosted a programme of free activities before Christmas, to support families looking for low-cost high-quality experiences.

Culture Strategy

Explore secured its position as a key enabler and partner of the city's Cultural Strategy, demonstrating its role in connecting communities, by securing one of seven positions on the Cultural Executive. The Executive is the team leading on the delivery of the Cultural Strategy over the next few years and this appointment puts Explore at the heart of the City's cultural ambitions.

Explore's Strategic Action Plan: key achievements

Future Libraries Investment Programme (FLIP) – Haxby and Wigginton library closed 28 May and work started on the development of Oaken Grove Community Centre. Focus groups were held with partners, residents, and key stakeholders in Haxby & Wigginton and Clifton with local input directly informing the internal and external design and layout of both capital developments. The new Haxby and Wigginton Library within the Oaken Grove Community Centre opened on 4 January and has already proved to be a fantastic success, attracting over 8000 visitors and receiving great PR and press attention.

The development of processes and action plan to support Implementation of digital records management system for archives

Confirmation was received in Q3 that a decision had been reached within City of York Council to finance and project-manage the implementation of a Preservica enabling Explore to manage born-digital records and securing the future of the archive holdings. A project team has been convened and work will continue in 2023-24.

Preparation for 2022/2023 application for Investing in Volunteers A self-assessment was completed based on the key element of the Investing in Volunteers accreditation. This has identified a number of key workstreams, primarily refreshing and updating existing policies and processes. An action plan and small working groups has been developed to progress this work.

Delivery of annual customer survey Surveys were developed and sent out to our community members and volunteers. Results were reported in Q4.

Replacement of Self-Service Machines A specification was developed and finance through CYC secured leading to a procurement exercise in Q3. AdvaNova were successful, and all machines were successfully installed by the end of March. This exercise facilitated an earlier removal of our fines and reservation charges.

Explore's performance: high-level summary and trends

We continue to track our performance against our pre-pandemic data however as the visit's performance demonstrates we are on track to be "back" to pre-pandemic levels next year. To have achieved this within three years is a sound achievement.

Visits: 724,717 visits in total across the year exceeding our target by 9%. Our aim was to be at 80% of pre-covid levels by the end of the year and we had achieved this by November. Our Explore Centres continue to perform strongly as does New Earswick and the new Haxby and Wigginton Library. The downward trend in attendance to our mobile library continues and will be a focus for our overall Service Review to be carried out in 2023-24.

Physical and E-Issues: Physical issues were at 95% of our pre-pandemic levels benchmarking ahead of the Libraries Connected sample. There is a decline in issues of large print and audio books however this is countered with an increase in e-issues which are 9% ahead of target (397, 376) which are generally considered to have better accessibility features.

PC Usage: There is a continued downward trend in PC usage with 41,866 sessions this year.

Website Usage: Our website has seen an 8% increase in visits compared to last year. We have seen an increased use of the on-line catalogue in the final quarter of the year which is potentially attributable to the removal of reservation fees.

Benchmarking

[REDACTED]

The figures in this report are based on data collected by CIPFA. Once again, the number of English Unitary authorities submitting figures to CIPFA has fallen, so whilst we can still calculate our quartile position, we cannot state it with confidence. Of 55 Unitary Authorities, in most cases only 21 submitted figures, less than half of the unitary authorities for the first time, and a big drop from 40 authorities just a couple of years ago. Whilst some of this drop-off may be due to authorities feeling that pandemic figures are not comparable, the number of authorities taking part has been on a downwards trend for several years and may not bounce back.

[REDACTED] this information relates to 2021-22 and not the most recent year. Therefore, when reading the report, it is worth noting that at the start of 2021-22 Explore had only three branches open with very reduced hours, no at-shelf browsing and no events. This turned around into a full offer within five months, but usage rose and fell throughout 2021-22 as new variants emerged and customer confidence ebbed and flowed.

Whilst all library services were tasked with the same broad challenge of providing for customers during a pandemic, decisions were made locally about when to re-introduce services like at-shelf browsing, PC use, and events. As such the 21/22 comparative statistics are not comparing authorities on a like for like basis in terms of the availability of services. Compared to other services, Explore tended to re-instate our offers swiftly as soon as it was safe and legal to do so, and therefore tended to be ahead of the national trend in progressing back towards pre-pandemic levels of use.

Some of the measures which have been available in previous years (e.g. PC usage, footfall as busiest branches, and staffing levels) have not been released by CIPFA so do not form part of this report.

Explore retained upper quartile performance for visits and e-issues whilst our physical issues performance moved back to upper quartile.

Contract Compliance – summary and overview

Opening Hours

Despite high levels of staff absence as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, thanks to the fantastic teamwork of our Operational Management Team, there were very few significant closures or impacts on our service delivery. This is a phenomenal achievement and testament to the team of managers who worked together to maintain full operational levels.

Planned closures:

01/06/2022	Haxby	Closure of Haxby & Wigginton Library until 03/01/2023 due to refurbishment of Oaken Grove Community Centre. Alternative service provision via pop-up service once a week during July and August at Wigginton Rec, and extended opening hours at New Earswick from June to December
w/c 05/12/2022	Mobile library	Annual leave of mobile library driver. Customers notified in advance and alt delivery of books arranged
w/c 19/12/2022	Mobile	Off road for repair
03/01/2023	Archives	The archives service was closed the w/c 03 January to carry out an audit of the pod and improve procedures for tracking retrievals from Deepstore
26/01/2023	Mobile	MOT on Thursday 2/2/23. It is needed at the depot from Thursday 26/1 at 3pm for preparation. Visit to Wheldrake 1.5 hours shorter than normal and mobile off the road w/c 30/1/23
15/02/2023	Mobile	Mobile off road from Wed 13/3 to Mon 27 /3 inclusive for annual leave. Alternative service delivery arranged so no customer impact

Unplanned closures

11/06/2022	New Earswick	Staff sickness elsewhere in service. Implemented access via self service
16/07/2022	New Earswick	Staff sickness elsewhere in service. Implemented access via self service
13/10/2022	Mobile Library	One stop affected due to need to leave due to family emergency
21/11/2022	New Earswick	Delayed opening by 1hr due to staff timetabling error
06/12/22	New Earswick	Closed early due to family emergency – service impacted by 1 hour
14/01/2023	New Earswick	Due to staff sickness. Customer access via self-service.
03/02/2023	York	Open at noon instead of 10 due to exploratory works related to heating issues.
04/02/2023	New Earswick	Staff shortage – customer access via self-service.
11/02/2023	New Earswick	Staff shortage – customer access via self-service
24/02/2023	York	Open at 12 noon on Friday 24/2/23 not at 10am to allow for further investigative work to be undertaken in relation to issues with the heating system
15/03/2023	All	Wed 15/3/23. All libraries and reading cafes closed at 2pm to allow for an all staff briefing at Burnholme 3.30pm until 5pm
13/02/2023	Dringhouses	Closed 13/2/23 until 15/3/23 inclusive due to broken boiler and health and safety issues regarding working outside recommended low temperature threshold

IT Access

2022-23 saw us focus on improvements to our public-facing IT offer to support an improved customer experience in a couple of key areas.

Q 1, we introduced a new customer-facing printing solution, with customers able to scan, photocopy and print A4 and A3 colour (as well as black and white) at five locations (the Explore Centres and Haxby and Wigginton Library). Remote printing was introduced as well as customers printing from Explore's PCs, so customers working from devices at home could send documents to print remotely, then collect at a library. Like all other business and domestic customers, we saw a sharp rise in power costs. We'd already planned on introducing power-saving measures for environmental reasons. The increased costs made these measures a priority, and we introduced approaches like the automated power-off of our computers after closing.

In March, we updated the entire suite of self-service kiosks, having procured a new solution via AdvaNova. As well as a sleek new design that's aesthetically pleasing, the new kiosks have improved accessibility options, a larger screen, improved customisability and the option for customers to email receipts to themselves. As part of the new self-service solution project, we will also introduce a third smart device application to complement the kiosks, in addition to the e-library app 'Libby' and the app that facilitates customers to print from their smart devices. Work is still ongoing, and we've reached the point where it will be available shortly on Apple and Android devices. Customers will be able to use it to check locations and opening times of our sites, but also to borrow and return library items on their phone/mobile device, just as they can do at the kiosks.

The only significant outage we suffered was at the beginning of March, when the provider of our Library Management Service was subject to a cyber-attack for a few hours over a couple of days. The attack was not designed to obtain information, so the motive remains unclear. It significantly impacted Explore's ability to deliver our services for 2 afternoons, but steps have been taken to prevent it happening again. This did not equate to a reportable incident via GDPR legislation.

Buildings

There were no issues with planned building management. All planned maintenance is managed by CARE plans overseen by City of York facilities management team.

Health and Safety

Across the year, there have been 54 incidents, showing no major concerns. Anti-social behaviour has been an issue in our Explore Centres at Acomb, Tang Hall and York, with all seeing numerous incidents across the year and a significant increase on the previous years. The approach to handling this has been consistent across all - staff training on our

acceptable behaviour policy, plus contact with local stakeholders to increase awareness and support including local ward teams, ward Councillors and PCSO's . No RIDDORs reported.

Cleaning

Cleaning is provided via a contract with Britsafe direct with Explore. Although there have been no issues with standards, there have been recent issues with high levels of staff absence as a result of the Coronavirus

Planned maintenance schedule 2022-23



Engagement and Outreach

Here For York

Our continued focus this year was to be here for York and to support our communities. Key to this was to provide information and advice through partners and our Explore Centres regularly host partners again to do just that. Here is just a flavour:- *Wilberforce Trust; Make a Difference (CV writing and interview skills etc); Healthwatch; OCAY, PCSO.*

Supporting digital confidence:

Explore staff provide regular digital support for customers, for example with on-line Household Support Payment and Energy Rebate Payments. Demonstrating the value of this one elderly customer said she "didn't know where to start," and was really grateful to staff for their support in enabling her to receive the "much needed funding."

In October, as part of Get Online Week, we re-launched our new Digital Explore Offer with support sessions at Explore Centres this complements our commitment to 100% Digital in York as the lead organisation and supports this wider approach.

100% Digital York Partnership Network:

Digital Café drop-in sessions in partnership with *Keeping Digital* are established at Tang Hall Explore and in community venues in Acomb at Sanderson House and St Wulstan's in Heworth. New sessions are planned for the Community Stadium.

We are working across the city, but with a specific focus in the Acomb area which has a wide demographic. It's a community that is supportive with lots of activity and community groups. We have started to work with community groups and organisations to introduce digital inclusion as a tool to achieve their aims and to support identified outcomes and impact.

We report progress at the Financial Inclusion Steering Group chaired by Pauline Stuchfield Director (CYC director for Customer & Communities). Working in partnership with CYC and Vodafone, we are now able to offer a social tariff to York residents who meet the criteria, and this information has been shared with the partnership and other information and debt advice agencies. Through Good Things Foundation National Databank scheme, we can provide access to free connectivity for the partnership, extending this benefit across the city.

In the heart of communities, safe, welcoming spaces for everyone:

Library managers build relationships with local partners such as local area co-ordinators and front-line contact is seen as crucial, and a game-changer as can be seen from the following experience at Acomb Explore:

A lady came to the desk in February 2022. At 71 she had lost her husband to cancer a couple of months before. She was really struggling to cope and was very nervous about even leaving the house, although she seemed physically able, because of Covid and just being alone. She was Chinese and her English was good, but she felt dis-associated from other people because she felt she couldn't speak to them as well as she would like. But since she had been out of China so long that she didn't feel like she conversed well in Chinese either and felt like she didn't belong anywhere. She was extremely distressed and upset. She spoke to the Acomb Explore Manager, who happened to be on the Reception Desk at the time. She told her that she wondered whether it was even worth carrying on with life. Fiona chatted to her and after a while told her about Penny Hutchinson the Local Area Co-ordinator. She asked if she could pass her details on to Penny and ask Penny to get in touch with her. A couple of days later Penny met the lady at Acomb Explore Café for a coffee and a chat. Many months later in July 2022 Penny told Fiona that she had seen the customer at a coffee morning in the community. She reported that she had made a lovely supportive network of friends and was feeling much stronger and was doing very well. In fact, Penny had given her a list of things in the local area, and she had replied "I am actually really busy Penny so I don't think I would have the time".

Penny Hutchinson said "we wouldn't have been able to do this without that initial contact from you all at the library. That crucial front-line contact is really a game changer."

From our Annual Events Plan you will see the range of events and activities offered in addition to the weekly events across the Explore network. The programme is varied and evolving as develop new activities and partnerships in response to community need.

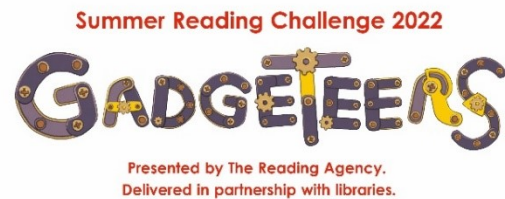
Attendance at events has increased again this year with a total of 39,896 people of all ages, attending 2,571 fabulous events.

See below for the key partnerships, developments and events during 2022-23 which supported Explore's strategic priorities:

Share the Joy of Reading(Children)

Summer Reading Challenge

The theme for the Summer Reading Challenge 2022 was *Gadgeteers*, with an aim to not only encourage reading for pleasure over the long summer holidays but also to inspire children to get hands on with invention and discovery. Children were challenged to read 6 books of their choice over a period of 8 weeks, launching in Explore Libraries on Saturday 16 July and ending on Saturday 10 September.



- A total of **2998** signed up for the challenge
- **343** children joined the library to take part in the Challenge.
- **58,836** physical books and **1932** e-books/e-audio were borrowed over the period of the Challenge

By reading books and attending an exciting range of events and activities over the summer holiday, the *Gadgeteers* helped to spark children's curiosity about the world around them and encourage them to feed their imagination over the summer holiday. They were boggled by brilliant facts, gazed at the stars, and were inspired to get hands on with creativity and invention.

There were over **60** events and activities to keep children busy at Explore York Libraries and Archives this summer. The majority of events were bookable via Eventbrite and we trialled a 'Pay What You Feel' payment option. Events were set up as donation on Eventbrite, with a recommended amount of between £1 and £5. This ensured that our events were available to all our children.

1594 children and **749** adults attended our events this summer. Non-attendance at the events was very low, with nearly all events and activities attracting over 80% attendance rate.



Engrossed in squishy circuits session
at York Explore
"Great workshop and introduction to
circuits"

Children: Bloodaxe Reading Challenge

The Challenge ran from 26 November 2022 to 28 January 2023. There was an increase of 8.5% of children starting the Challenge this year compared to 2021/22, and 46% of children finished the Challenge this year compared to 35% in 21/22

The Francesca Simon author event for children who completed the challenge proved popular, 99 of the 154 eligible children confirmed their free place at the event. Jorvik also sold tickets to attend, for the first time including the Challenge author event as part of their Festival. On the day 180 attended (100 children and 80 adults), 150 of these were Challenge completers and their parents and 30 were paid bookings made directly with Jorvik.

Share the Joy of Reading (Adults)

The Big City Read



The choice of *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* as a Big City Read title had been an obvious opportunity for quite some time.

Kate Atkinson herself has said "Looking at *Behind the Scenes* now, I can see that York..... is the all-pervading main character of this book. The novel is a hymn

to my relationship with the city, constructed out of history, memory and nostalgia."

5000 print copies were distributed in libraries and reading cafes, via partner organisations, and at pop-up sessions. They were also given out at all of the events. We also purchased unlimited simultaneous downloads of the title as an e-book and e-audio for the period of the Big City Read

The launch was the flagship event of the Big City Read, designed to raise awareness and promote the whole programme of activities and was held at the Yorkshire Museum within Museum Gardens as it was a perfect fit with the theme of the book as one of the locations in the story. The launch featured an interview with Kate Atkinson - a coup for Explore as she no longer appears at events of any kind - and a giveaway of signed copies of *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*. We were also able to offer signed copies of Kate's most recent book, *Shrines of Gaiety*, published the day before the event, for sale from our partners Fox Lane Books. Fraser Mann, Senior Lecturer in Literature at York St. John University interviewed Kate. Fraser

has long admired Kate Atkinson's work and has taught *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* to first year literature undergraduates for several years.

265 attendees at the launch event. In total we held 45 activities (including outreach) with a total of 679 attendees.

General feedback:

"The Big City Read encouraged me to pick up a book and start reading again!"

"The Big read got me to visit my local library for the first time"

"The Big City Read put me in touch with other people who have a joy of books and helped me feel part of a wider community."

"I am just visiting York from Australia. The whole concept which I found in a pamphlet in library I thought was wonderful! Someone cared!"

Challenging Imaginations

Children and families: The Firework-Makers Daughter performance

Working with Next Door But One eight performances of *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* were delivered in October half-term in Acomb, York, Tang Hall and New Earswick Libraries. Tickets were priced as low as possible to help ensure it was an affordable family activity. All were fully booked with 173 people attending the performances. The audience was 60% children and 40% adults.

- 20% of audience members had a disability
- 12% of audience members had never been to the theatre before this performance. With only 4% of the total audience saying they were frequent theatregoers.
- Key reasons the audience chose to attend included: trusted family friendly activity (96%), familiarity of venue (68%) and an affordable price-point (64%).
- 92% of audience members would 'definitely' attend a future NDB1 performance and the remaining 8% would 'almost certainly' attend.



"A brilliant story that was adapted perfectly for the age of my children. The fact that all of us were giggling throughout is evidence of lovely storytelling. Also love the inclusion of Makaton - spot on!"

"A beautiful story that takes you on an adventure and shows you the importance of friendship. Great for children's and adults' imagination."

Adults: Sonic Traces at Hungate Reading Café



Sonic Traces brought together a diverse group of artists. Throughout the day, a large-scale collaborative drawing was created in response to a continuously changing soundscape, encompassing environmental sounds through to experimental music. Artists interpreted the sounds they heard by translating their sensory experiences of sonic textures and atmospheric vibrations into marks on paper. The meeting area was turned into an exhibition white space.

The artists that took part gave overwhelmingly positive feedback with interest about using the space.

The event also gave us the opportunity to use the Hungate Café Instagram platform to promote a creative event using short videos (reels).

Children and families: English Touring Opera: The Wish Gatherer

The Wish Gatherer: We hosted the English Touring Opera at Acomb Explore. They performed a children's opera, the Wish Gatherer. At only £4.50 a ticket it was a low-cost opportunity for the children of Acomb to encounter a cultural experience which would normally be out of reach. In addition, we provided 20 free tickets for disadvantaged families identified through our local contacts ie LAC etc. The event was really popular and sold out really quickly. There were 71 attendees in total.



Supporting Health and Well-being: Adults

York's Dead Good Festival

The festival aims to encourage people to be more open about dying, death and bereavement. The launch day was hosted at York Explore. Events and activities supported people to express themselves in different ways, whilst offering advice and support on practical matters. Launch activities included:-

- Before I Die Wall – people could contribute to a global art installation by writing on the wall <https://beforeidieproject.com/>
- Harpist Emma Yates entertained visitors with soothing music
- Ambulance Wish Foundation – Ambulance on Library Lawn <https://ambulancewishfoundation.org.uk/>
- Post Box – letters to loved ones after they have died – things unsaid.
- York's Threshold Choir – will visit people who are dying (on the threshold of life) in hospital, hospices or at home and sing comforting harmonies
- Green Funerals in a Climate Emergency – Presentation and discussion about environmentally sustainable disposal of human remains
- Soul midwifery - Presentation and discussion about supporting people during the dying process.

Footfall was steady throughout the day and people participated in all the activities.

World Mental Health Day

On 10 October 2023 World Mental Health Day was promoted on social media and we held a targeted Big City Read giveaway at Foss Park hospital. *Reading Well for Teens* new collection was launched at Explore Centres.

Big City Read Artist in residence

A major new element of the Big City Read was to host an artist in residence. In partnership with SLAP (Supporting Live Art and Performance) we hosted an artist as part of their Arts Council funded artist incubation programme during the Big City Read. We worked with Tabitha Grove to support her to develop her solo piece *Them There Then That* which included themes of loss, grief and mental health issues. As part of the development process, we hosted four workshops at Explore centres, followed by performances at five libraries including one at Hungate Reading Café. Audience sizes were small initially, but grew as the mini tour progressed. Many people who booked had opted to book a free ticket but wanted to make a donation after the performance, testament to how much the audiences enjoyed and were moved by it. Tabitha will be touring the show nationally in 2023.

Connecting Communities

Our City Hub

June saw the launch at York Explore of Our City Hub for migrants and refugees. The hub was held every Saturday for an initial 12 month funded project (4 x 10 hour co-ordinator posts), and has now been extended to June 2024. The hub is supported by 40+ volunteers from migrant communities who speak a variety of different languages.

Standard format is two sessions from 9.30-11.30am and 1-3pm. The morning session, held in the front room of the café, is a drop-in information session. Co-ordinators are on hand to support with information and referral to support organisations if needed. During the morning volunteers provide activities in the children's library while parents access the information they need. The afternoon English classes have been so popular that an additional class is now held during the morning, the afternoon is also a time for community activities.

In addition to the regular Saturday sessions larger events showcased a particular migrant community in York. Some of these were held at York Explore and others provided an opportunity for outreach. The first event was International Chinese Children's Day also held on 4/6/23. This was open to anyone to come and learn more about Chinese culture and over 100 people, mainly families, took part in a variety of activities, all run by the volunteers.

Feedback was unanimously positive and demonstrated how events such as this really bring communities together:

*"Can you do this kind of event more, my kids love it" , "lovely and friendly volunteers" ,
"The staff were very welcoming"*

"A great opportunity to learn about Chinese culture".

A special event in August marked Ukrainian Independence Day. The Lord Mayor attended and gave out certificates to the Hub volunteers and engaged with the activities which included workshops based on Ukrainian culture, talks around the history, culture and literature of Ukraine and a look at traditional embroidery. Also in attendance was a singer who packed out the Marriott room while singing traditional songs and the national anthem. She also led singing on Library Lawn and photos were taken with the civic party. The day also saw the official launch of the York Ukrainian Society - a newly formed community group representing the needs and aspirations of the local Ukrainian community. One of the aims of the society is to strengthen ties between Ukraine and the local communities through sharing culture and education.

Anecdotal feedback from communities mention the welcome received at York Explore and the feeling that this really is a space for everyone. A regular café user was so intrigued that he wrote the following poem and presented it to Our City Hub staff.

*Near where he sits, there's a meeting
The nature of which is not clear
But out of the general free-flow of talk
'Immigrant' catches his ear*

*Perhaps it's come up in discussion?
What does 'immigrant' mean?
How do we see ourselves?
How are 'immigrants' seen?*

*'Immigrant' isn't a word he can like
Implying that all are the same
Here, at this table, are people ...
Each with the gift of a name*

*From time to time more words float
free -*

*'Ukrainian'? That's pretty clear
Albanian...? Romanian...?
Armenian...?*

Europe is gathering here!

He wants to say "Hello!

Welcome to this land"

To smile a welcoming smile

To say "I understand"

To each of these young people ...

With different stories to tell ...

Facing their futures away from home ...

Truly, he wishes them well!

It's not as straightforward as this

Of which he's well aware

But here, today, in the moment

There's friendship in the air

Poem by Mike Smith, Café User (a personal experience but written in the third person)

Explore Your Archive Week

As part of Explore Your Archive Week in late November we focused on social media content linked to some of the themes of this national week. We also held in-person *Heritage Hunters*

session during the week to encourage local communities to explore their archives.



The week culminated with the launch of our [City Archives video](#) featuring a poem by spoken-word artist Kitty Greenbrown.

Library Lawn: A community space in the heart of the city



We took advantage of the glorious, hot weather in summer to share some great outdoor classic games - Chess, Connect 4, Jenga, Snakes and Ladders, Bowls, and Hopscotch - for everyone to enjoy on Library Lawn at York Explore. The games were all very popular, especially the chess set. We had great feedback from families saying how much they enjoyed the games and how much fun they had. Over the summer, lots of families visited the garden and also took advantage of

the picnic tables donated by York Bid, which enabled them to stay longer and enjoy their lunch.

People and Places

Overview of Public Service Delivery

Following an erratic couple of years due to the pandemic and post-pandemic recovery, this year saw the return of KPIs set across our service for footfall (visits), issues and volunteers. The overall target for footfall was 20% increase on last year, with a return to 80% footfall f pre-pandemic, based on rising from 60% to 80% during the course of the year. The target for book issues for 2022-23 was 93% of pre-pandemic issues. Volunteer target was 1 volunteer per library opening hour.

We experienced month-on-month growth in terms of footfall and book issues, with the typical trend of the winter slump tempered by libraries nationally benefiting from high-profile media campaigns during the cost-of-living crisis advocating for libraries as warm, safe, welcoming places. Inevitable this this contributed to the changing patterns and rise in usage, as people in our communities sought out free and low-cost entertainment, with others just seeking warm places to be. This continued in spring, with all libraries offering a free or low-cost activity programme for February half term.

January saw the long-awaited opening of Haxby and Wigginton Library, with the first day alone drawing in over 500 people through the door. The opening day was attended by BBC Look North and BBC Radio York, with local TV coverage shown on the 6.30pm BBC Look North, and regular updates on BBC Radio York throughout the day.

Volunteer recruitment remains challenging. The trend is for Gateway Libraries in village/community locations to have stronger support from their community than Explore Centres. A targeted campaign by both Acomb and Tang Hall saw recruitment improve from Q3, while York Explore will be the focus in 2023-24 with regards to growing and developing their volunteer team.

We are yet to see footfall during evening opening hours returning to pre-pandemic levels, so a full performance evidenced service review is planned for 2023- 24 to consider future options.

The year ended with us performing absolutely brilliantly, achieving 724,771 visits, 62,211 visits above our expected target. During the year footfall went from just under 70% of pre-pandemic to 80%, while book issues rose to 95% of pre-pandemic. For context, this compares with 70% for library services nationally for visits and 73% for book issues, so Explore's performance is exemplary.

Number of Visits across all libraries.

Cumulative	19/20 actual	22/23 target	22/23 actual	Vs target	% vs target	Vs Prev	% vs prev
April	72,065	45,401	50,995	5,594	12%	-21,070	-29%
May	148,576	94,751	107,957	13,206	14%	-40,619	-27%
June	226,979	145,713	162,641	16,928	12%	-64,338	-28%
July	310,668	202,203	221,718	19,515	10%	-88,950	-29%
August	396,917	261,715	283,471	21,756	8%	-113,446	-29%
September	475,360	317,017	343,489	26,472	8%	-131,871	-28%
October	559,927	377,905	407,876	29,971	8%	-152,051	-27%
November	636,607	434,264	471,528	37,264	9%	-165,079	-26%
December	697,040	479,589	520,811	41,222	9%	-176,229	-25%
January	778,241	541,707	586,581	44,874	8%	-191,660	-25%
February	853,490	600,402	652,714	52,312	9%	-200,776	-24%
March	901,829	662,506	724,717	62,211	9%	-177,112	-20%

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Volunteers and Friends Groups

Volunteers

With the new target of one volunteer per library opening hour, our volunteer support has increased across the year. Key activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge and the Big City Read recruited volunteers specifically to deliver those projects, whilst the launch of Explore's digital offer in October saw the introduction of a new role to support customers who need 1-to-1 help accessing digital resources. In 2022-23 the number of volunteering hours was 73% of the number in 2019-20 - this figure rose fairly steadily through the year, ending with 90% in February (March is not an ideal comparator due to March 2020 being affected by lockdown). Whilst the final figure was beneath our target for the year (-9%) we knew it was a stretching target and several libraries did meet their own branch targets.

	19/20 actual	2022-23 target	22/23 actual	Vs target	% vs target	Vs Prev	% vs prev
April	2,316	1,576	1,462	-114	-7%	-855	-37%
May	2,255	1,692	1,680	-12	-1%	-575	-26%
June	2,071	1,582	1,247	-335	-21%	-824	-40%
July	2,759	1,755	1,335	-420	-24%	-1,425	-52%
August	2,625	1,701	1,590	-111	-7%	-1,035	-39%
September	2,171	1,704	1,339	-365	-21%	-832	-38%
October	2,713	1,943	1,727	-215	-11%	-985	-36%
November	2,337	1,880	1,913	33	2%	-424	-18%
December	1,582	1,316	1,311	-5	0%	-271	-17%
January	2,156	1,943	1,567	-375	-19%	-589	-27%
February	1,991	1,755	1,785	30	2%	-206	-10%
March	961	1,943	1,958	16	1%	997	104%

Friends' groups

The number of Friends Groups remained stable, with Friends groups re-focusing this year following two years of relatively low levels of activity due the pandemic. Our aim is now to introduce two new Friends groups at Huntington and New Earswick Libraries, both libraries without a Friends group.

Looking ahead

Looking ahead, widening the diversity of our volunteers is an area of focus for us in the financial year 2023-24 following the results from our volunteer survey in January 2023, where the volunteers who responded to the survey were overwhelmingly female (81%), White British (91%), and most likely to be aged 65 to 74 (57%). The ethnic profile is relatively close to the local population, but the sex and age figures are not representative of the local profile and present an opportunity to diversify.

Community Members

23 new community members were added to the register and 36 members were removed during 2022-23 There was a total of 774 community members on 31 March 2023.

We carried out a cleansing operation on our register of members ahead of the vote for new Community Directors and AGM in September 2022 to ensure that all Community Members were also current library members in line with the Rules of Explore.

2 Community Directors were appointed following an election in which all members were invited to participate. 6 community members put themselves forward for election We ran the election online during August, with analogue arrangements in place for members without digital connectivity. Luke Castle and Rosemary Cook polled the most votes and were duly elected as Community Directors until 2025 and the result was announced at the AGM at Tang Hall Explore on 5 September with 24 staff and community members attending. All members were invited to attend – by email or by post if no email address was available for the member.

We communicated regularly with Community Members during the year through the director recruitment campaign and election, through various other direct emails. In December we invited all members to complete a short survey to tell us how they wished to engage with Explore. 81% of respondees asked us to send them a regular newsletter and this will be actioned from Q1 of 2022-23. Jenny Layfield directly emailed all Community Members to introduce herself following her appointment in January 2023.

We recognise that Community Members can act as powerful advocates for Explore in York and beyond, our Audience Development Strategy for 2022-23 had a dedicated strand “Explore - Shaped with You” and our Annual Review 2021-22 published in September 2022 ended with a call to action to engage with Explore as a friend, volunteer or community member.

Customer Engagement

Throughout 2022-23 Explore demonstrated our core value of co-production with residents and customers informing our decisions in a multitude of ways. This report summarises some of the key ways in which we engaged with residents and customers in order to not just verify that they are satisfied with our services, but also gain their feedback to genuinely shape their library and archives service.

Formal Customer Feedback

Consultation as part of the Future Libraries (FLIP) programme

During 2022-23 we consulted customers, residents and other stakeholders about our forthcoming library developments at Acomb and Clifton.

Clifton



In May and June 2022, we ran a series of focus groups and informal discussions for the third phase of the Clifton consultation, previous phases having been completed prior to 2022-23 and therefore outside the scope of this report.

The purpose of this third phase was to enable creative customer-led solutions around layout, design etc.; to identify problems/gaps in the proposed plans; and to learn more about the needs of specific audiences.

With this in mind library staff met with several groups for some informative discussions: children from Vale of York High School; users of the current Clifton Library; general residents; clients at MySight; York Disability Forum and Hoglets (as a potential user of a performance space).

Attendees provided a wealth of ideas for how to design the new space including practical suggestions such as partitions; a catalogue PC; meeting booths and wider car parking spaces. These ideas have been fed into the latest iteration of the plans and are summarised on Explore's website at <https://explore.york.org.uk/libraries/future-libraries/clifton/>

The next phase of the consultation specifically relates to the outdoor spaces and is planned for July 2023.



In March 2023 we ran a survey regarding the forthcoming development work. Previous consultation exercises addressing the Future of Front Street (Spring 2021) and Library Satisfaction (Autumn 2021) had already given us a flavour of what residents and customers want, particularly around plants and trees; pedestrian areas; outdoor café areas; independent businesses and speciality markets; quiet study areas; better protection from draughts; and improvements to the library's appearance. Building on this, the March survey asked respondees to rank their priorities for the work, and invited them to add their own comments.

The survey attracted 263 responses from residents, customers and other stakeholders, both online and in print. This has provided valuable feedback which will feed into the architect's proposals for the works. The priorities identified by respondees were varied, with no very strong front-runner, but the most popular options picked were around improving the Children's area (inside and outside), the café, and quiet study provision.

Big City Read Survey



In Autumn 2022 we ran an online survey of participants following our showcase festival, the Big City Read. These 141 survey responses gave us some practical insights to help us make improvements to the programme, including highlighting which types of marketing were most effective to get people involved, and which events audiences rated most highly. We identified the current audience we're reaching, which is dominated by older women, and learned which events attract the most diverse audiences. We also gathered some valuable insights into what people gain from joining in with the Big City Read, which includes a sense of community and a connection to the city.

"The Big City Read encouraged me to pick up a book and start reading again!"

"Grew up in York around the same time as the author and was reminded what York used to be like..."

"The Big City Read put me in touch with other people who have a joy of books and helped me feel part of a wider community."

Public Services Quality Group survey (PSQG)



In Autumn 2022 Explore ran the PSQG, which is a national pen & paper survey of Reading Room users administered by CIPFA. We gathered feedback from 50 customers. Overall customer satisfaction rating was 9.3 (out of 10) and there were many areas where

perceptions had improved from the last time the survey was run in 2016, so the results were very positive overall. We identified some useful information about our audiences: for example, over half the respondees were new users (either new to Explore or to Archives in general) and the age of the audience has decreased since last time with the largest age group now being under 25s. We learned which of our services customers are least satisfied with, which helps to inform service improvements.

Ad Hoc Customer Feedback

On an ongoing basis Explore gathers ad hoc feedback from customers via many channels, primarily face to face conversations, but we also gain feedback via our online form; email and social media comments. We collect these comments on a database in order to monitor trends and calculate response times where required.

In 2022-2023 there were 412 items of customer feedback recorded on the database: 65 complaints, 282 compliments and 65 suggestions. These comments have been explored in detail in quarterly reports throughout the year.

In terms of suggestions and complaints, the key themes we identified in 2022-2023 were suggestions for shaping the new Haxby Library (e.g. furniture and signage); requests for longer café opening hours across the library cafes; requests for foreign language books; and suggestions to re-instate printed newspapers and magazines following our move to digital provision.

The majority of comments recorded however are complimentary, with customers keen to tell us what our services mean to them. It's clear that Explore has a significant social impact on our customers, especially in terms of their sense of connection to the community and to their wellbeing. A few comments from 2022-2023 are:

Staff helped a customer to take part in an online job interview when he had never used Zoom before. Customer said *"Thank you so much for your help with the zoom call - I got the job"*

"This really is my happy place. It's a wonderful library with great books and lovely staff. I look forward to coming."

"I don't know how I would survive without the library."

"Thank you for helping me to get warm."

An adult with special needs who used to come to the library once a week prior to lockdown visited Acomb. Staff found him books and he chatted with them about others he wanted. His support worker said he had been almost completely non-verbal since the beginning of lockdown and literally hadn't spoken to anyone. She could not believe that he had engaged with staff independently and couldn't wait to go back and tell his mum what had happened and said how delighted she would be.

Audience Development

Marketing and Engagement

The Audience Development Plan for 2022-23 was focused on attracting new audiences and on building connection and deepening engagement with existing audiences. It is inter-connected with and supports our Engagement Strategy. This is achieved through promotional campaigns that focus on two key areas Here for You and Shaped with You. Here for you will be demonstrated through the promotion of our events programme and their value offer and through here for you promotional campaigns, such as winter warm places. Shaped with you will focus on deepening engagement with communities, with a specific focus on those who have already shown an interest in being more involved. During the year we also added Make A Difference and use this to promote all the ways people can get involved in supporting Explore.

The promotional campaigns fall into specific categories and use specific hashtags to aid identification of posts when reporting. These are:

#Explore Together - is a focus for our events programme

#Here For You – Is a focus for showcasing our value offers – for example support communities this winter as a ‘warm place’

#Shaped With You – Our Future Libraries programme, specifically Haxby & Wigginton Explore and Clifton Explore

#Make a Difference – Showcasing all the different ways to support Explore

Key social media measures

The ‘reach’ on Facebook and ‘Impressions’ on Twitter, show how many people have seen our posts.

The ‘engagement’ records how many people have interacted with our post, through likes, comments, shares or retweets and link clicks.

The ‘engagement rate’ shows the percentage of how many people who saw our post then went on to interact with it.

In Q3 we started to capture numbers of new followers for our organizational accounts.

<p>Q1 overall social statistics</p> <p>Impressions and Reach 141652 Engagements 3668 Engagement Rate 2.6% Number of Posts 292 New followers: Stats not available</p>	<p>Q2 overall social statistics</p> <p>Impressions and Reach 180017 Engagements 4591 Engagement Rate 2.6% Number of Posts 355 New followers: Stats not available</p>
<p>Q3 overall social statistics</p> <p>Impressions and Reach 247960 Engagements 6565 Engagement Rate 2.6% Number of Posts 545 New followers 70</p>	<p>Q4 overall social statistics</p> <p>Impressions and Reach 180115 Engagements 4529 Engagement Rate 2.5% Number of Posts 396 New followers 130</p>

Highlights of key promotional campaigns



Q1 #Shaped With You

- Community Director recruitment - 6.5% Facebook engagement rate, and 11 retweets on 15 June (4 being influencers)
- Also the renovations to Clifton Explore, and Haxby & Wigginton Library. Clifton Renovations in April had an overall 4.9% Twitter engagement rate

7.3% Engagement Rate on Twitter for #ShapedWithYou in April overall

The engagement rates for these campaigns and posts are particularly high in relation to the average engagement rates for Q1 of Twitter 2.5% and Facebook 2.92%

Q2 Value of the Summer Reading Challenge #HereForYou



For the Summer Reading Challenge value campaign, we had 5 posts over 5 days in July, with similar imagery to identify the posts as part of this campaign (as shown below on this Facebook post). The first SRC Value post on Facebook had a huge 1666 reach, 28 engagements, thanks to 13 shares (this compares to the average engagement for a post that month was 7.7, with a 399 average reach per post.)



Big City Read Value campaign ran 5 posts over 5 days in September, with similar imagery to identify the posts as part of the value campaign (see example below). Overall it had Twitter impressions of 982, 59 engagements and 6% engagement rate (which is much higher than the average engagement rate per post 3.5%).



We focused our social media on the family offer of the York Card, with a series of images highlighting the card benefits over the summer holidays (social media promotions ran from 18 July to 2 Sept). We received 80 twitter engagements in August, which is reflected in that the York Card sales went from:- £480 in June to £736.66 in July, £740 in August and £766.66 in Sept.

This Twitter post had an engagement rate of 8.4% (average post in August was 2.9%).

Q3 #ExploreTogether Big City Read

In October Twitter impressions more than doubled for #ExploreTogether to 68537 with Twitter engagements almost doing the same to 2086. The Big City Read



accounted for 39484 of these impressions and 1158 of the engagements (which impressively was more than the whole of September's #ExploreTogether 33428 impressions and 1092engagements).

October's most popular tweet was about the BCR, and was an attempt to see if we could increase reach and engagement with an 'interactive' post (shown below). We had a reach of 2281 (average 392 per post in Oct), a huge 84 engagements (average 12 per post in Oct) and engagement rate 3.7% (average 2.8% in Oct).

Q3 #HereForYou Arts Council NPO



In November the first Arts Council NPO announcement (shown below) had great attention on Twitter with 4740 impressions, 178 engagements and 3.8% engagement rate (which was great versus the averages 676, 19.8 and 2.5% per post). It also had an incredible 19 retweets! Key influencers on Twitter were ACE North 27.4K, Hull Libraries 14.1K, Darren Henley (CEO Arts Council) 35.7K, Make It York 7470

#HereForYou Annual Review



The Annual Review campaign in November was a series of 5 posts over 5 days highlighting key details from this year's Annual Review. They were presented using a similar template for continuity and to make them recognisable. It had a good engagement rate overall – on Twitter 4.9% compared to 2.5% average for the month. The post below had a 6.5% engagement rate on Facebook (average 2.5% for the month).

This post was used as an example of effective marketing in Super Library Marketing blog by USA Library Marketing guru - Angela Hursh

#ShapedWithYou #MakeADifference

The campaign to have a day of posts highlighting the different ways our customers can #MakeADifference to Explore, as part of the international campaign 'Giving Tuesday' had great stats overall - on Twitter 6231 impressions, 280 engagements and engagement rate 4.5%. The introductory post below had 868 impressions, 47 engagements and 5.4% engagement rate (compared to average for the month 676, 19.8 and 2.5% respectively)

It was shown that the Giving Tuesday campaign caused direct action by customers. In the following days and weeks the libraries were very active in posting examples of how people were able to #MakeADifference, such as donations, friends groups, books sales, shopping and cafes, which meant the #MakeADifference campaign has been able to naturally continue. Hence in December the #MakeADifference campaign had a 6257 reach and 74 engagements on Facebook, and 6288 Twitter impressions and 197 engagements with an overall engagement rate of 3.1% (compared to 2.6% month average). Key influencers on Twitter were Libraries Connected 8728, CILIP Yorkshire and Humber 1067



Q4 #ExploreTogether York Card



The York Card was promoted for York Residents' Festival in January with an impressive total reach of 13897, 244 engagements on Facebook, and total impressions of 8379, 278 engagements and 3.3% engagement rate on Twitter. The most popular post of the month on Facebook [shown below] was on 25 Jan about this campaign, earning 3982 reach and 48 engagements (average per post this month 404.1 and 7.9 respectively). Facebook's Save The Date post had a huge 3063 reach and 57 engagements (average per post this month 404.1 and 7.9 respectively). This both

confirms and correlates with the above learning, that customers are prompted to action when given a time reference. The campaign went well on Twitter too, and on 15 Jan one

tweet alone got 1064 impressions and 28 engagements. On Facebook key sharers were COYC 16K followers and Little Vikings 10K followers.

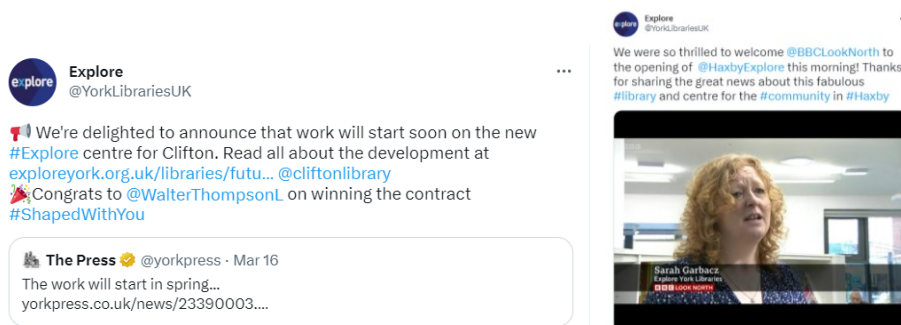
Total York Card sales in Jan 2023 were £11833.00. (This included £3,683.31 library sales compared to £628.32 in December.

#ShapedWithYou Future Libraries

In January the Haxby opening was very popular online, with a total of 6552 impressions, 239 engagements and an engagement rate of 3.6% on Twitter. The tweet to welcome BBC Look North alone [shown below] had 2528 impressions, 89 engagements and an engagement rate of 3.5% (average per post this month 592.5, 16.4 and 2.6% respectively). Facebook also took 2673 reach and 52 engagements in all.

March also had lots of news for #FutureLibraries with information about the Acomb Consultation, the official opening at Haxby and news of the contractor for Clifton. This was all exceptionally popular and well engaged with. One post alone on Twitter about the new contractor [shown below] had 1278 impressions, 49 engagements and an engagement rate of 3.8%. (Twitter average impressions per post 457.8 people, average actual engagement per post 11 people, and an average engagement rate 2.2% per post this month). Also the 'ribbon cutting' tweet for Haxby had 28 engagements and 4.7% engagement rate.

Key retweeters were LiveWellYork (1313 followers) York Learning (1841 followers) CILIP Yorkshire and Humberside (1073 followers), COYC (49.5K), Walter Thompsons (1471) and Libraries Connected (8900).



Social media isn't the only promotional material we focus on, many of the key campaigns highlighted were supported by printed material too, such as posters and brochures as well as press releases. Our events newsletter is mailed direct to a total 2,940 subscribers. Mailchimp analytics show that 47% of newsletter subscribers open our emails with a 9.1% click through rate.

We use Eventbrite as our event ticketing platform and for promotion. Our website, podcasts and You Tube channel are used to connect with audiences through engaging content.

Advocacy

The Annual Review: was our main advocacy tool this year: it was shared with councillors and local organisations and partners and attracted both national (Arts Council) and international recognition (USA Library Marketing Blog). The Annual Review will feature on Angela Hursh's Super Library Marketing blog as good practice in April 2023.



Advocacy through Media Mentions

We recorded 146 mentions of Explore in print, online and other local media during 2022-23. Media mentions are increasing and as we develop our marketing capabilities and take a more considered approach to advocacy and our value offers as well as to simple promotional activity we are starting to see much more engagement from external media channels.

Highlights:

Q1 included Barbara's investiture as BEM coverage for Archives relating to the anniversary of



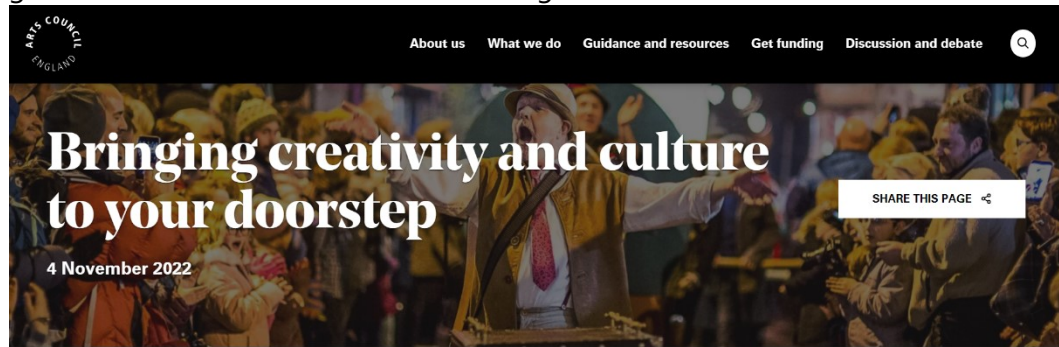
the Baedeker Raids (including a feature length article in the Yorkshire Post), the launch of OurCity Hub and the Community Director recruitment campaign.



Q2 breaking ground at the new Haxby & Wigginton library site, the Summer Reading Challenge launch, the Big City Read, the launch of Digital Cafes at Tang Hall. There was extensive negative coverage of the Mini Golf scheme.

Q3 Big City Read events, Explore's cost of living offer – Libraries as Warm Places, Explore's activities as part of the international Aesthetica Festival, and the announcement of

Explore's success in joining the Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisations 2023-26 was featured on the Arts Council's website and in local and national coverage.

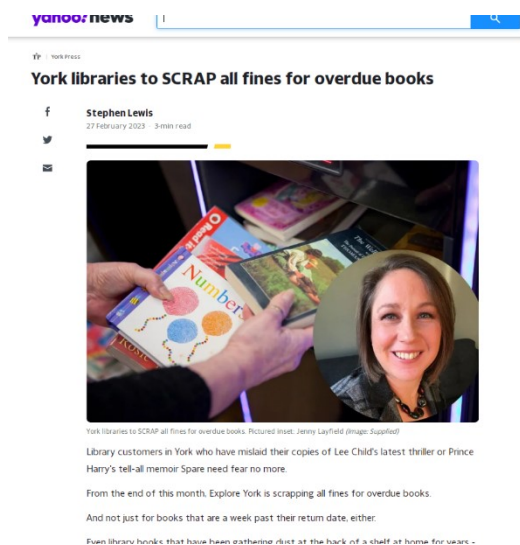


£43.5 million investment in Levelling up, as Arts Council England backs art, culture, and creativity for more people in more places, across the country

Today, Arts Council England reveals details of its new national portfolio of funded organisations for 2023-26.



Q4 Coverage for Haxby and Wigginton opening was extensive including local TV and radio, new Chief Executive, temporary closure and re-opening with working heaters of Dringhouses Library, the removal of overdue and book reservation charges, and the appointment of a contractor for Clifton Explore



THE PRESS Work to start on new £5.3m centre in York as contractor confirmed



Jack Skide, Paul Hamerton, Cllr Smalley at site of new Clifton library (Image: City of York Council)

By Ed Horner
Reporter
@EdHornerPress
9 Comments

WORK on a new £5.3m Explore library learning centre in York will begin in late spring this year, as the council confirms its contractor.

Having secured planning permission in October 2022, the new building will be constructed by the Northallerton-based construction firm, Walter Thompson Contractors, on the site of the former Clifton Without Junior School.

Get involved with the news
Send your news & photos

Archives



Performance:

Nationally numbers of researchers are still not where they were pre-pandemic this is particularly noticeable with the reduction in international researchers. Many noted that this was part of a wider pattern of change in how researchers use/access archives. Some are redeveloping their KPIs to ensure they are capturing this change in use. We have reviewed our KPIs post covid and the new KPIs are divided into staff-mediated interaction and self-directed interaction. We have also fine-tuned the statistics we gather for interactions with our catalogue, as researchers can access our catalogue descriptions via TNA Discovery and the Archives Hub. Analytics for all of these are now included in our KPIs.

ALH staff mediated engagement: 1,305

Staff Mediated Engagements included: researchers in the reading room plus attendees at events (be they on site, off-site or online; for adults or for children; public facing or for targeted audiences)

ALH Self-directed engagement: 129,185

Self-directed engagements include: Flickr views, sessions on the Images website, Ancestry Documents retrieved, Find My Past records viewed.

Archives deposited and accessioned:

A total of 28 were received this year.

New catalogues or catalogue entries added to AtoM 2022-2023

Civic and Democratic Services, City of York Council	Bound and signed Minutes of Full Council
York 41 Club (1946-2022) 41 Club was formed in 1946 to provide a way for members of Round Table (a Rotarian Club) to continue their friendships after retirement from Round Table at the then obligatory age of 40.	Minutes of the York 41 Club

Electoral Services, City of York Council	Full and Edited (Open) Electoral Registers 2021
Lord Mayor of York	Records relating to Lord Mayor of York 1983/84 and 2010/11. Includes administrative documents, photographs and press cuttings.
York Musical Society (1767-present)	Includes records of patrons, subscribers, and chorus; rehearsal registers; lists of singers and seating plans; reports and financial statements; minutes of committee meetings; newsletters, schedules, programmes, and flyers; and a typewritten poem, with commentary.
New Earswick Parish Council (1934-present)	Parish Council minutes, with some meeting agendas
Kleiser family of York (1819-1977)	12 volumes created by the Kleiser family of York, containing details of theatre trips and reviews of entertainments
River Foss Society (1973-present)	Minutes, reports, newsletters, Membership list, Accounts and financial papers
Friends of Rowntree Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Documents concerning the administration of Rowntree Park -Notes and talks on Rowntree Park, prepared by the donor -Friends of Rowntree Park newsletters 2003-2017 -Miscellaneous pictures and photographs, 20th century
Alison Sinclair papers (?-present)	1 slide box containing 200 35 mm transparencies of York, 20th century from South Parade to Walmgate Donor copies of 3 volumes of Dept. National Heritage, Revised List of Buildings of Special and Architectural Historic Interest, City of York 1997
Fraser Hayes Four (1940s-1969)	Photographic negatives relating to the Fraser Hayes Four

Former staff member of York Explore Library	Photographs of York Explore Library prior to refurbishment
Former owner of house (donor)	Deeds and legal papers relating to property in Scarborough Terrace, York
Director of Public Health, City of York Council	Report from the Director of Public Health outlining the impact of, and the city's response to the pandemic. The report is usually published annually but due to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic this report covers two years.
York Coroner's Office	Coroner's inquest case files, treasure files and non-inquest papers
Brother of a former nursing sister at Northfields School (donor)	Slides of children from Northfields Special Needs School, Beckfield Lane, Acomb
Participant in the celebrations (donor)	Ephemera concerning celebrations in Copmanthorpe for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II
York Scribes	Records of York Scribes
Electoral Services, City of York Council	Private Freedom Ceremony and Freedom Court Applications
Electoral Services, City of York Council	Electoral Registers (Full and Edited), 2022
Leslie Peter Wenham	Records of Leslie Peter Wenham
Former owner of house (donor)	Deeds relating to property in Clememthorpe
York Society of Magicians	Accrual to records of York Society of Magicians
Member of the York Musical Society	Accrual to records of the York Musical Society: programmes
Minster Ladies Bowling Club	Records of the Minster Ladies Bowling Club
Magazine editor (donor)	Faith Link' magazines
Photographer (donor)	Photographs of York, including a Viking Festival

Audit: in January and February. It is best practice for archive services to undertake collections audits, and year we focused on the Archives Pod.

Digital Records Preservation

In late October CYC completed the purchase of Preservica and we gained access to the system on 01 November. Focus for archivists during 2023 will be training, development of policies and procedures, and the first ingest of born-digital material. Main achievements on this project to date:

- onboarding meeting with Preservica
- development of roadmap identifying main workstreams
- Archivists have completed all 4 core Preservica modules.
- stakeholders group established (Andy Laslett leading) with regular meetings taking place;
- pre-ingest procedures for Community deposits drafted and ready to test;
- Digital Preservation Policy substantially rewritten following procurement of Preservica and in accordance with most recent advice issued by DPC;
- Archives Gift Agreement rewritten to incorporate terms and conditions of deposit for born-digital material;
- ingest of test material carried out;
- Civic Archivist has joined a support group of archivists in local authorities rolling out Preservica;
- section for digital records has also been added to our Disaster Recovery plan.

Key challenges are:

- lack of resource at CYC for developing internal procedures and processes needed to support the roll out of this product in relation to civic records (Ian Smithies' role has been scaled back to that of Programme manager – which does not entail any substantive work on the project);
- future planning for catalogue integration, particularly in relation to metadata guidelines and conventions;

The Civic Archivist attended a risk assessment session on 31 March with Andy Laslett and Ian Smithies. During this session, the above risk regarding CYC capacity was formally noted.

CYC are trying to address this risk by advocating for a permanent records manager role. Lorraine Lunt from Information Governance is currently putting together a business case for this role, to be submitted to CMT in April

Magistrates Records (Public Records Act): There have been several staff changes at the Magistrates Court, which has made it difficult to progress the deposit of these records in accordance with the Public Records Act 20-year rule. Under this rule all public records should be deposited with a PoD (formal Place of Deposit – i.e. York Explore) within 20 years of creation. Previously, records creators were operating under a 30-year rule. When the new rule was introduced, it was expected that two years’ worth of records would be transferred every year for 10 years in order to ‘catch-up’ with the 20-year ruling.

This has not happened with the Magistrates records, and they are therefore falling quite far behind schedule with these deposits. Civic Archivist has met with Delivery Manager for York Magistrates Court and the TNA to try to identify and remove the roadblocks that are preventing the transfer of these records to York Explore.

Coroners’ records (Public Records): The merging of the areas of jurisdiction for the York and North Yorkshire Coroner has resulted in an increase in admin associated with access to these records. It has also recently been brought to our attention that a large tranche of case files transferred in 2021 have associated digital audio records that need to be preserved and linked to the paper record. The hybrid nature of this record set is likely to reflect current record-keeping practices throughout CYC (and other local authorities) and will require a combined effort from Explore and CYC to devise appropriate solutions

Engagement and Outreach:

Heritage Hunters: Building on the success of last year’s project at Hull Road, the York Museums Trust (YMT) are running the Heritage Hunters programme again for the Groves area in York. We have worked with YMT to develop and deliver two archive sessions for participants of the group

The first session was held virtually and included an overview and introduction to local and family history research. This was followed by a second session which was held in person at York Explore.

Overall, we had 20 attendees to these sessions, and the participants are very enthusiastic about their topics. In the new year they will begin to conduct their research, and we will continue to support their project by helping with any research enquiries, proof-reading the final information leaflet which will be produced, and holding a sharing event as part of Local History Month in May.

As part of the city-wide *Residents Festival*, in January we held two events focused on the theme of historical maps in York. The first event – Map Attack! Lego City of Wonder – invited families to build structures out of Lego, inspired by an historic map of York printed onto a large floor mat. Families and children were able to place their structures on the map, to imagine historic York and to redesign the York of the future. The second event – Mapping Historic York - was an exhibition of original maps and plans of the city. These events were

designed to complement each other and provide an opportunity for residents of all ages to engage with York's past. The events were very popular, and in total we had 486 attendees to both events through the course of the day.

Promotional video: We worked with Kitty Greenbrown (poet and performer) and Hewitt and Walker to create a promotional video for the archive service. The video was made available on our You Tube channel and posted on social media during Explore Your Archives Week.

Student Placements and teaching: Archivists have supported 4 student placements and delivered 11 teaching modules this year to 148 students and 10 tutors who were in attendance. (awaiting student placements numbers)



MA in Buildings Archaeology – York University (shown in photo)

The sessions are in high demand, and we continue to receive good feedback about our sessions from the course tutors, such as the following comments received from York College:

"I just wanted to drop a quick email to you to say thank you so much for your time and effort last week. The presentation and bespoke archived items were truly inspirational and beneficial for all the students."

Future Libraries Development Programme

Focus throughout the year was primarily on the capital investments following the decision by City of York Council Executive to invest £7.7m for the development of Explore Centres at Clifton and Acomb and the co-located gateway library in Haxby & Wigginton with Oaken Grove Community Centre. Our main priority was involving the community – customers, potential customers, key stakeholders, in the decision-making right from the outset, so the year has really been about starting and continuing the conversations with our communities, ensuring their voices were heard from the outset. This will continue to be a priority through the next year, with communities informing those local decisions and libraries being co-designed with them.

A brief summary on the status of each co-location is provided below:

Acomb Explore	Decision made by CYC and Explore to postpone the development of plans until the budget required to deliver Clifton is fully understood. First stage consultation with the community occurred throughout March, with 263 people commenting to say they would like us to see more focus on a larger children's area, larger café area and quieter study spaces.
Bishophorpe	Updated asset management plan with options of community co-location partners and indication of preferred model. To be discussed with Board.
Clifton Explore	Held numerous engagement sessions with stakeholders to develop the plans for the scheme, both internal and external. 4 community partners on board with Agreement for Lease in place and regular partnership meetings held. Initial room data sheets agreed, and layout firmed up. Planning application submitted and approved. Appointed contractor to start on site April 2023. Shelving specification developed and out for quotes with deadline of April '23
Copmanthorpe	5-year lease agreed in July 2020. Updated asset management plan with options of co-location partners.
Dringhouses	Updated asset management plan with options of community co-location partners. Preferred co-location option identified, to be discussed with Explore Board.
Dunnington	Explore entered into 12-year lease with Dunnington Reading Rooms, with option of a 6 year break, should more desirable co-location opportunities arise,

Fulford	Updated asset management plan with options of community co-location partners. No further actions.
Haxby & Wigginton	Held numerous engagement sessions with stakeholders to develop the plans for the library and reading café elements of the scheme Management agreement and agreement for lease agreed with Oaken Grove Community Centre Trustees Appointed Parkinson for the build. Build completed Dec 22 Haxby and Wigginton Library opening collocated with Oaken Grove Community Centre 3 January 2023.
Huntington	Updated asset management plan with options of community co-location partners. Preferred co-location option identified. To be discussed with Explore board
Poppleton	Meetings held with manager of The Poppleton Centre on the co-location of the library with the Centre. Poppleton Centre Trustees in agreement in principle. Negotiations help re capital or revenue commitment from Explore, with Explore specifying revenue as preferred model The Poppleton Centre submitting planning application with development over 3 phases – library in phase 3. 3 rd phase yet to have funding identified.
Strensall	Updated asset management plan with options of community co-location partners. No further actions

Looking ahead to 2023-24

Clifton Explore Next phases of the public engagement strategy for Clifton Explore, focusing on the external landscaping, and moving onto the co-design of internal spaces once a shelving contractor is identified.

Acomb Explore Following the indication from the community for an improved Acomb Explore Centre, a first draft layout will be produced, to then use to follow-up the conversation with the local community in summer 2023.

Co-location of the remaining Gateway libraries is now a priority. The asset management plan has had a full update, with a way forward recommended for each Gateway Library. These recommendations will be discussed with Explore board in May.

Bookstock

Stock Inventory

As always, the stock count is taken on the final day of the year, 31 March 2023, and we use CIPFA definitions for stock categories to ensure consistency over time.

	22/23 inventory	21/22 inventory	Up/Down on last year
Reference Books	19852	19878	0%
Lending Adult Fiction	51610	51020	1%
Lending Adult Nonfiction	44203	44133	0%
Lending Junior Fiction	35783	34144	5%
Lending Junior Nonfiction	8028	7484	7%
Reserve Books (in storage, transit etc.)	16640	14527	15%
Total lending book stock	139624	136781	2%
Total book stock	176116	171186	3%
Reference Audiovisual	0	0	
Lending Adult audiobooks	3585	3712	-3%
Lending Children's audiobooks	748	771	-3%
Lending AV (DVDs, language packs)	66	72	-8%
E-books	7235	6799	6%
E newspapers, emagazines, ecomics	7208	7258	-1%
E-Audio and e-audiovisuals	3867	3451	12%
Music streaming	0	0	
Hardware	40	40	0%
Reserve AV (in storage, in transit etc.)	333	205	62%
Total lending AV	22749	22103	3%
Total AV	23082	22308	3%
Total Stock	199198	193494	3%
Toys (outside CIPFA inventory)	201	215	-7%

There are no very large changes from last year.

The amount of children’s non-fiction has risen again following last year’s report, when we identified that there was a temporary drop due to withdrawing out of date stock and stated that these would be replenished over time, as they have been.

The number of e-audiobook titles has increased and the number of physical audiobooks has decreased. This is part of a long-term trend towards digitisation and is being managed sensitively to avoid alienating the customers who need physical audiobooks. Note that in line with CIPFA definitions the e-library lines count publications rather than individual copies, so we have 7,235 e-books in stock, but some of them are borrowable by two, three or unlimited numbers of people at once.

The number of ‘reserve’ books is higher than last year, but this category is less meaningful than the other categories. It includes anything in storage or administrative locations e.g. Reading Group Sets, In transit, Long overdue or in Reserve stacks.

Stock Turn

This is a measure of how hard the stock works – average issues per item per year. Explore’s stock turn figures are usually excellent. The most recent benchmarking figures, for 21/22, demonstrated this once again.

	22/23 inventory	22/23 issues	Explore Stock turn 22/23	Explore Stock turn 21/22
Lending Adult Fiction	51610	243994	4.7	4.3
Lending Adult Nonfiction	44203	126283	2.9	2.5
Lending Junior Fiction	35783	237010	6.6	6.0
Lending Junior Nonfiction	8028	40631	5.1	4.3
Total lending book stock	139624	647918	4.6	4.1
Lending Adult audiobooks	3585	8797	2.5	2.4
Lending Children's audiobooks	748	2183	2.9	2.5
Lending AV (DVDs, language packs)	66	147	2.2	1.8
E-books	7235	47377	6.5	6.6
E newspapers, emagazines, ecomics	7208	300540	41.7	38.3
E-audiobooks	3867	49851	12.9	12.1

In all cases the 2022-23 stock turn was higher than in 21/22. All figures are well above CIPFA comparative figures because York has always been a library service in which the collections work hard.

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 for physical stock. 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. A stock turn over 10 is not necessarily a problem for e-books and e-audiobooks, especially if they can be borrowed by multiple people at once.

Stock Acquired, Purchased and Retired

22/23 total stock including books, AV, e-library, reference and toys	21/22 total stock including books, AV, e-library, reference and toys	Up/Down on last year	Up/Down on last year as %	All 22/23 acquisitions including purchases and donations	22/23 acquisitions - purchases only	Retired stock 22/23
199399	193709	5690	3%	26722	18872	21032

In 2022-23 we accessioned more items than we de-accessioned, so the overall stock size rose by 3%. 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 the case of e-books it also includes licences expiring.

The total number of items added to stock, 26722, was 11% higher than in 21/22 in spite of the core stock fund not rising to meet rising book prices. The increase was due to a range of factors. Some of the stock for the new Haxby Library was paid for by Explore funding identified from beyond the normal stock budget. The reading group sets were refreshed using income from subscriptions to the service. There was a campaign encouraging high quality public donations. Finally, there were some music hub items added by volunteers retrospectively cataloguing some items already hidden in the collection.

The stock fund is having to be spread thinly with item prices rising as they are, and this issue may worsen in May/June 2023 when the main stock contracts are re-procured, since the new contracts offered may have less favourable discounts than the current contracts.



Annexe 1

[Redacted content]