libraries ni

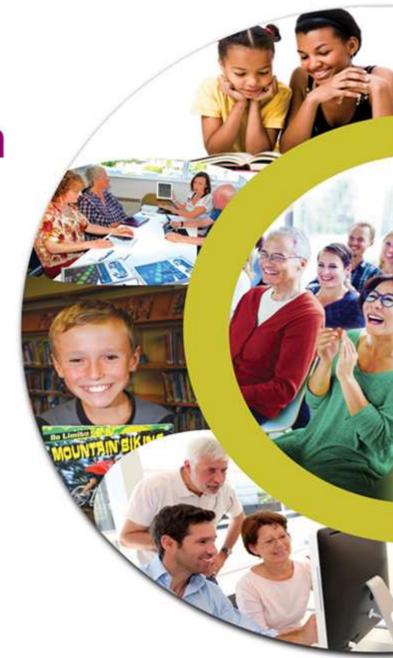# Annual Business Plan
2020 - 2021

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Foreword by Chairperson and Chief Executive

We are pleased to present the Annual Business Plan 2020/21 which sets out the direction of travel for Libraries NI for the next twelve months and outlines our ambitions for delivering the public library service in Northern Ireland. The Annual Business Plan is set very much within the overarching framework of the newly developed Corporate Plan which sets out the Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions for the period 2020 – 24. Both the Business and Corporate Plans are closely linked to wider government priorities with the aim of making a lasting and sustainable contribution to improving the societal wellbeing of individuals and communities in Northern Ireland.

This plan has been developed in a climate of financial, societal and economic uncertainty following the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which means that it will be important to keep it under review throughout the year. With this in mind we must focus our efforts where we can have the greatest impact, while being mindful also of our statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive service for everyone who lives, works or studies in Northern Ireland. In reality given the scale of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, including the closure of libraries to the public in March 2020, much of the corporate focus and effort during 2020/21 will be on 'reconnecting' library services and reopening the library network. Our services must continue to be efficient and provide value for money and we believe that libraries will continue to deliver on priority agendas that make a real difference to the lives of individuals and communities.

The extensive network of libraries is strategically important and we believe that this importance will strengthen as we re-establish services and continue to work collaboratively with organisations across government departments, public bodies and the voluntary and private sectors. Libraries can support the delivery of other services, providing local access points and helping customers to connect with information and

services that contributes to social and economic wellbeing. This is facilitated by our dedicated and professional staff who are committed to providing help and support to assist people, no matter what their background or circumstances.

The Annual Business Plan adopts, for the first time, an outcome based planning approach with three clear desired Outcome Areas and corresponding Strategic Actions. The outcomes delivery planning approach is a major change for Libraries NI and work will commence during 2020/21 to integrate this methodology throughout the organisation, with a view to forming a basis for developing business plans in subsequent years, including new ways to report the achievements of the organisation.

Libraries are trusted service providers in the heart of communities supporting people from different backgrounds and demographics, encouraging a love of reading and providing opportunities for people to learn and to connect with information, IT and services. As we respond to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will continue to work closely with officials from the Department for Communities, other government departments and partners, throughout the next twelve months, to deliver for people whilst building upon our unique position as a trusted and valued community resource.

Bernard Cullen
Chairperson

Jim O'Hagan
Chief Executive

1.   Who we are

1.1   The Northern Ireland Library Authority, more commonly known as Libraries NI, is a regional body responsible for the provision and delivery of a public library service in Northern Ireland. Libraries NI is the largest single library authority in the UK. Our primary duty, as set down in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.

1.2   The Board of Libraries NI, when fully constituted, comprises a Chairperson and 18 Members, the majority of whom are councillors within the meaning of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Board Members are appointed by the Department for Communities.

1.3   Our Vision
A visible, accessible and inclusive library service at the heart of communities, enhancing lives and valued by all.

1.4   Our Mission
Connecting people with information, ideas and experiences to foster lifelong learning, inspire curiosity, provide enjoyment and strengthen communities.

1.5   Our Values

Caring - we care about our library users, the community, each other and what we do. We will provide a safe and welcoming environment where people can connect and explore. We will show respect for users of our service and for each other, will build trust and will strive to provide positive experiences for both external and internal customers.

Accountable – we take responsibility, as individuals and as an organisation, for effective stewardship of the resources allocated to us and for delivering on our commitments. We will act with honesty and integrity and maintain high standards of governance, responsible leadership and efficient operations.

Responsive – we are a learning organisation that is open to new ideas and better ways to serve individuals and communities. We have a focus on quality, are creative and flexible and will continue to explore innovative ways of working to ensure that services are vibrant, effective and relevant to the changing needs of our customers.

1.6 Our Network and Services

The library network is crucial to the delivery of both an effective and comprehensive library service taking account of the geographic and demographic spread of Northern Ireland. Our services are currently delivered through a network of 96 branch libraries, heritage libraries, mobile libraries and a homecall service, which provide a wide range of free services including:

- books and other material such as audio books, newspapers, periodicals and magazines

- downloadable eBooks, audio books and eMagazines and other online resources, most of which can also be accessed from home

- supported access to computers for use by the general public with free internet access for library members

- support for the development of ICT skills

- free Wi-Fi, enabling library members to use their own devices

- learning opportunities

- storytimes, rhythm and rhyme sessions and other activities for children

- school class visits

- family history, heritage and local studies material

- access to information from a range of sources and organisations

- access to cultural and creative experiences

- reading groups for children, teenagers and adults

- health and wellbeing information, activities and events

- social activities, such as 'Knit and Natter' and 'Tea and Newspapers', which promote community cohesion and combat isolation

- study, meeting and shared social space.

At the end of the 2019/20 business year, like many public services, library services were severely disrupted by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it is likely that services provided during 2020/21 will be limited.

2. The Planning Context

2.1 The Annual Business Plan 2020/21 has been developed drawing extensively on the new Corporate Plan covering the period 2020 – 24. In this way it builds on the work of previous years but also represents the first chapter in the next stage of the Libraries NI journey.

2.2 In developing the Annual Business Plan 2020/21 consideration has been given to a range of external factors that influence, shape and impact on libraries, library use and the public sector landscape within which the library service is delivered in Northern Ireland. These factors include public policy, economic, social, cultural, technological developments, library customers and our staff. We

recognise that we do not operate in isolation and take account of government priorities as well as strategic developments taking place in respect of library service provision and wider public service provision generally.

2.3   The most significant external factor that will influence our work during 2020/21 is the disruption caused by COVID-19 pandemic and many of the actions in this plan will reflect our response to that.

2.4   Our priorities and outcomes are guided by the vision and priorities of the Department for Communities. and the framework of societal outcomes articulated in the draft Programme for Government (PfG) and Outcomes Delivery Plan as well as being informed by themes emerging from Community Plans. A detailed consideration of these factors is set out in the Libraries NI Corporate Plan 2020 -24 which can be accessed Here .

3.   Outcome Areas and Strategic Actions

3.1   This Annual Business Plan has been developed taking account of outcomes based principles and approaches. An outcomes-based approach represents a fundamental change to the way in which Libraries NI plans and delivers a public library service in Northern Ireland. The PfG framework sets out the major societal outcomes of the Executive and provides the strategic direction for the delivery of public services in Northern Ireland. At a population level 12 priority outcomes have been set and all Departments and public bodies are required to work collaboratively to deliver against them and to contribute towards the overarching aim of 'improving wellbeing for all – by tackling disadvantage and driving growth'.

3.2   In developing the Annual Business Plan we have taken account of our statutory responsibility to deliver a public library service and have sought to closely align what we do with those parts of the PfG framework that have most relevance and where we believe our impact to be most significant. The plan also draws on themes and outcomes articulated in community plans developed by the 11 district councils in Northern Ireland.

3.3   We have identified three Libraries NI outcome areas and have developed a number of strategic actions around each of the outcome areas. The Libraries NI outcome areas and strategic actions provide the context and framework for 'delivery' of priorities and services with more detailed annual objectives and targets being set to ensure the aspirations and ambitions articulated in the four-year Corporate Plan are delivered.

4. 2020/21 Strategic Actions, Annual Targets and Objectives

4.1 The following section sets out, in detail, the Libraries NI Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and annual targets and objectives.

4.2 Annual Business Plan 2020/21

	Strategic Actions		Annual Targets / Objectives	
**Outcome 1: A shared, inclusive public library service supporting communities and societal well-being**			
1	Provide a customer focused public library service to people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland which contributes to societal wellbeing	1.1	Devise, implement and keep under review approaches to service delivery that are designed to maximise safe access to library services and which take account of the changing environment throughout the year.	
		1.2	Provide access to stock in line with the approaches to service delivery in operation and taking account of the changing environment throughout the year	
		1.3	In line with the Public Library Standard Stock spend £2.25 per capita on stock – PLS target.	
		1.4	Maximise participation levels in a number of areas, including: • loans and renewals • active members • new members	
		1.5	Learn from the COVID 19 experience and use this learning to shape future services which are aligned to the changing needs of society.	
2	Create strong mutually beneficial regional and local partnerships, including with other public services and community planning partners, to develop libraries as access points for a wide range of services.	2.1	Maintain contact with partners and stakeholders and identify opportunities to work together effectively and identify new partners as appropriate	

3	Reduce barriers to library use especially for those at risk of being socially excluded.	3.1	Reconnect library services and reopen branch libraries and provide services, taking account of government and public health restrictions, including for groups/areas at risk of social exclusion.	
4	Raise awareness and increase understanding of library services with customers, the general public and stakeholders.	4.1	Raise awareness of Libraries NI and Libraries NI services including communication about evolving service delivery models as we emerge from COVID-19 restrictions.	

Outcome 2: Inspired, informed and literate children and adults.				
5	Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults.	5.1	Provide access to programmes and activities for children and/or for adults relating to reading, cultural heritage, learning, health, digital inclusion, good relations, wellbeing and the effective use of information in so far as is possible, taking account of public health guidance and the changing environment throughout the year.	
6	Provide access to Heritage resources and services to the widest possible audience.	6.1	Promote use of heritage resources, in so far as is possible, taking account of public health guidance and the changing environment throughout the year.	
7	Improve digital services, access and literacy.	7.1	Provide access to ICT, including computer resources, Wi-Fi and internet access taking account of public health guidance and the changing environment throughout the year.	
8	Promote access to information, information literacy and support children and adults to become more informed citizens.	8.1	Deliver and develop services and programmes to promote access to information in effective ways including the development of online and social media resources, taking account of public health guidance and the changing environment throughout the year..	

	Outcome 3: Effective governance and delivery				
9	Maintain an effective organisational and governance framework and support and develop our people to enable delivery of high quality public services.	9.1	Reduce overall sickness absence by 2% from the 2019 performance (Composite average FTE days lost target 9.68).	
		9.2	Engage staff through effective communication, providing them with accurate and timely information.	
		9.3	Implement recommendations and proposals for front line services arising from the organisation and structures review by 31 March 2021.	
		9.4	Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 submitted for audit by 30 June 2020 and certified by NIAO by 31 October 2020.	
		9.5	Work with the Department to put in place a new Partnership Agreement.	
10	Make best use of available resources to support identified priorities and deliver an effective and valued public library service.	10.1	Deliver annual resource and capital expenditure within 1% underspend of respective total budgets.	
		10.2	Secure approval for e3 outline business case by 1 October 2020.	
		10.3	Engage with the Department for Communities and agree a delivery approach for the Belfast Central Library Project by 31 March 2021	
		10.4	Review the Corporate Risk Register quarterly at Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Board, and review Service and Project Risk Registers bi-annually at relevant Committees.	
		10.5	Implement major and minor capital works and maintenance programmes in line with available resources by 31 March 2021	
11	Implement an OBA approach to business planning and performance measurement.	11.1	Deliver OBA training to Senior Leadership Group by 31 March 2021.	

5.   Measuring Results

5.1   Effective planning, performance management and reporting are vital in ensuring that the needs of service users are met, essential services are delivered and statutory obligations discharged and that the organisation continues to improve and be open and transparent about progress and risks.   The move to an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach to planning and delivery requires a different approach to performance management, measurement and monitoring. An important element of any outcomes based approach is the shift in emphasis to outcomes and measuring the impact of actions or interventions as opposed to simply measuring the amount of work that is delivered. Two distinct levels of reporting and monitoring are typically associated with OBA:

(1)   Monitoring outcomes at a population level, which is done by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) using a range of indicators to reflect collective progress of departments and public bodies. This monitoring reflects change at a population level with no one department, Arm's-Length Bodies (ALB) or other organisation likely to effect outcomes in isolation.

(2)   Monitoring actions through performance accountability measures which are concerned with the impact of individual actions delivered by ALB's.

5.2   Strategic Actions related to the outcome areas identified in this plan will be monitored and their impact measured at the organisation level. Nevertheless, by working to realise actions in outcome areas Libraries NI will be able to make its contribution towards achievement of population outcomes such as health, education and young people, societal wellbeing, digital inclusion, connecting people and strengthening communities

5.3   The OBA approach will be incorporated into the existing performance management framework in Libraries NI which consists of: different elements including:

- the Corporate Plan which sets out the high level outcomes and strategic actions linked to the PfG and DfC strategies for library services
- an annual Business Plan which sets out the actions we need to take and the targets that we need to achieve in year
- Key Performance Indicators, which are used to report regularly at Board level and to DfC on progress in relation to the annual Business Plan
- Service Plans which translate the Business Plan into more detailed actions and targets to be taken forward by various teams within the organisation
- the Staff Appraisal process which includes the setting of personalised targets and goals for individual members of staff to enable them to fulfil their respective roles in meeting the actions and targets set out in the Service Plans
- the Risk Management and associated assurance processes which are embedded in the routines and activities of the organisation and provide a structured and coherent approach to identifying, assessing and managing the risk to achievement of objectives and

- the Annual Report and Accounts which provide detailed information on our work during the year.

5.4 The most significant risk to the achievement of outcomes and strategic actions is the uncertainty regarding funding levels going forward.

5.5 The Outcome Areas, Strategic Actions and Key Performance Indicators for the 2020/21 Business Plan are set out below.

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

Outcome Area: A shared, inclusive public library service supporting communities and societal wellbeing	
Strategic Actions:	*Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):*
• Provide a customer focused public library service to people living, working or studying in Northern Ireland which contributes to societal wellbeing. • Create strong mutually beneficial regional and local partnerships, including with other public services and community planning partners, to develop libraries as access points for a wide range of services. • Reduce barriers to library use especially for those at risk of being socially excluded. • Raise awareness and increase understanding of library services with customers, the general public and stakeholders.	No. loans and renewals No. new members No. active members No. of branch libraries reopened and providing services % increase in online, eBook and eMagazine activity Social media likes

Outcome Area: Inspired, informed and literate children and adults

Strategic Actions:	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
• Promote reading, literacy and lifelong learning through delivery of resources, services, programmes, activities and initiatives for children and adults. • Provide access to Heritage resources and services to the widest possible audience. • Improve digital services, access and literacy. • Promote access to information, information literacy and support children and adults to become more informed citizens.	Deliver programmes which promote reading to children Deliver programmes which promote reading to adults % of branch libraries providing WiFi / Public Access Terminal. No. of WiFi / Public Access Terminal uses.

Outcome Area: Effective Governance and delivery

Strategic Actions:	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
• Maintain an effective organisational and governance framework and support and develop our people to enable delivery of high quality public services. • Make best use of available resources to support identified priorities and deliver an effective and valued public library service. • Develop and implement an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach to business planning and performance measurement.	Annual net spend (resource and capital) will be within budget. Underspend will be minimised Capital and minor works programmes will be implemented in accordance with the agreed timetable and budget Reduce sickness absence overall by 2% compared to the 2019 performance (9.68 FTE days) 95% of ICT service provision standards will be met 100% of invoices will be paid within 30 working days 90% of invoices will be paid within 10 working days 95% of Internal Audit service targets and standards will be met.

6.   Financing Our Services

6.1   The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in late March disrupted the regular budget setting and financial allocation processes and as a consequence the Department for Communities made an indicative financial allocation of £26.165 million of resource funding to Libraries NI for 2020/21 equivalent to the initial 2019/20 baseline budget position.

6.2   A Spending Plan was prepared on the basis of the indicative allocation and a series of planning assumptions about cost increases, the unique challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and additional pressures anticipated to materialise in 2020/21. Although the indicative initial 2020/21 budget is equivalent to that set in April of the previous year it represents a reduction of approximately £4.903 million compared with the final budget position for 2019/20.

6.3   The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the ability of the organisation to deliver savings measures such as those introduced in previous years and has compounded pressures by removing regular sources of income. The pandemic has generated substantial additional pressures in managing our business under continuity arrangements and the eventual phased return to more normal service provision. Despite applying substantial constraints to planned expenditure relating to stock, staff and estates maintenance it has not been possible to 'balance' the demands against the indicative resource allocation of £26.165 million.

6.4   Based on current projections, we anticipate expenditure against the indicative resource budget in 2020/21 will be as follows:

Table 2: Category of Spend

Category of Spend	£000's
Staff	17,634
Stock	500
Premises	4,314
Supplies and services	5,130
Vehicle	240
Sub-total	27,818
Income	(380)
Total	**27,438**

6.6   A capital funding allocation of £4.77 million has been confirmed to meet committed expenditure to the end of June 2020 arising from the e2 information technology and infrastructure upgrade project. As at May 2020 no further capital allocations have been confirmed in relation to the completion of already

commenced investment projects or to permit development of other planned projects.

7. Governance and Delivering the Business Plan

7.1   Libraries NI has a corporate governance framework which specifies organisation and governance structures, including roles and responsibilities, to ensure proper and effective management and delivery of plans and priorities within available resources. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring delivery of the Libraries NI Business Plan and is supported in this by two Directors who manage core business groups to deliver library services to the public and to provide support services within the organisation. Arrangements are in place for regular monitoring of the Business Plan and the Libraries NI Board and Committees provide scrutiny and oversight.

7.2   Libraries NI has a well-established framework for risk management. A number of risks identified in 2019/20 are likely to be relevant in 2020/21 and these include:

- Uncertainty and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to reconnect library services and reopen branch libraries
- the challenging financial environment
- the need to complete the next stage of organisation restructuring
- the impact of ongoing industrial action

7.3   At the start of each business cycle a fundamental review of the corporate risk register is undertaken with a view to ensuring a strategic focus is maintained on key risks to the achievement of objectives and targets.

Libraries NI Board Members

Professor Bernard Cullen   Chairperson

Councillor Donal Lyons   Vice Chairperson

Mr Neil Bodger

Alderman Thomas Burns

Councillor Alistair Cathcart

Councillor Glenn Finlay

Councillor Julie Gilmour

Councillor Cheryl Johnston

Councillor Garath Keating

Mrs Deirdre Kenny

Councillor Cathal Mallaghan

Mrs Wendy Osborne OBE

Mr John Peto

Mr Harry Reid

Dr Margaret Ward

Councillor Billy Webb

Miss Linda Wilson

Libraries NI - Organisation Structure

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                    Chief Executive          Chief              Head of Internal Audit
                    Jim O'Hagan            Executive's          Brian Doherty
                                              Unit              PA to Chief Executive
                                                                Mary McGrady
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PA to Director of Library Services **Diane McGlynn**	Director of Library Services **Helen Osborn**	Director of Business Support **Desi Miskelly**	PA to Director of Business Support **Gillian Clarke**

• Branch and Mobile Libraries- South and East • Stock • Heritage (including MCMS, ILS) • Equality, Good Relations and Targeting Social Need	Head of Service **Adrienne Adair**	Assets Manager **Tim Neeson**	• Estates Management • Capital Planning and Development • Contracts Management • Vehicle Management
	Deputy Head of Service **Julie Reid**	Finance Manager **Rita McNamee**	• Financial planning, control and reporting • Accounts Payable / receivable • Procurement • Payroll
• Branch and Mobile Libraries- North and West • Digital Inclusion • Organisational Development • Reading and Reader Development • Children's Services • Health	Head of Service **Trisha Ward**	HR Manager **Jacqui McKinstry**	• Recruitment and Selection • Terms and conditions of employment • Employee and Industrial Relations • Equal Opportunities • Staff Development
	Deputy Head of Service **Margaret Bell**		
• Marketing • Public Relations • Communications	Head of Strategic Marketing and Communications **Glenn Beattie**	Head of ICU / ICT Manager **Desi Curry**	• ICT and Information Management Services • e2 • FOI/Official Statistics