

# Nottinghamshire County Council Library Strategy 2025-2035



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# Foreword



**Councillor Scott Carlton**  
*Portfolio holder for  
Communities and Public Health*

Nottinghamshire County Council has a long track record of delivering an innovative public library service for the people of Nottinghamshire. The shared use of resources and spaces across our library network makes the library service central to building communities, connecting people, improving well-being and supporting access to education, leisure, heritage and culture.

When I speak to customers, volunteers and staff, either on a library visit or at an event, the reach and positive impact of the service never ceases to surprise me. Our libraries are the front door to public services, and offer users welcoming places to meet, borrow, learn, discover, and celebrate.

Our online offer has grown significantly in recent years, offering original content, e-books, e-audio, online ordering and interactive ways to find information.

From the new parent joining a rhyme time group to the entrepreneur starting a new business, from the older person joining a Places of Welcome session to the researcher tracing their family tree, the library service can open up new skills, connections and sources of information that make a real difference to people's lives. Literacy, digital inclusion, cultural expression, heritage, healthy living, and lifelong learning are all cornerstones of the service, and put libraries at the heart of local communities.

In our last strategy, the council made a commitment to maintain an extensive library network, invest to improve buildings and digital services, and continue to innovate the way we deliver our service. This new strategy builds on the success of the last, but also reflects the changing needs and expectations of library users and the need for the service to remain financially sustainable in a challenging economic context.

The ambitions of the Nottinghamshire Plan, and the council's approach to supporting a resilient, healthy county through prevention and early help, underpin the new library strategy and action plan, meaning the library service will be well placed to meet emerging challenges and make the most of new opportunities in the coming years.



# Context

## National Context

The county council has a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service. The government department responsible for libraries, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), identifies seven key strategic outcomes:

- cultural and creative enrichment
- increased reading and literacy
- improved digital access and literacy
- helping everyone achieve their full potential
- healthier and happier lives
- greater prosperity
- stronger, more resilient communities

A new national library strategy, which will build on the previous 'Libraries Deliver' strategy, is currently under development, following an independent review (January 2024). The review acknowledges that public libraries can contribute significantly to helping people achieve their full potential. It also highlights a historic lack of recognition across government of the work libraries do, as well as low public awareness of, and a lack of data relating to their impact.



## Local Context

In Nottinghamshire, we define a good library service as one that is evaluated against the following factors:

- accessibility - locations of buildings, vehicles, and technology;
- customer experience and journey - welcoming, inclusive, and non-bureaucratic;
- range and quality of resources and services - good book stock, information service, cultural, learning, digital and heritage resources, and programmes;
- impact - able to deliver positive outcomes for individuals and communities;
- staff skills - development and flexibility;
- value for money.

We also uphold seven design principles:

- meet legal requirements;
- be shaped by local needs;
- focus on public benefit and deliver a high-quality user experience;
- make decisions informed by evidence, building on our success;
- support delivery of consistent and quality core service offers;
- promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise;
- be financially sustainable.

This library strategy outlines how we deliver the service in line with these principles and within available resources.



# Library Service Vision and Purpose



## Change and Development

Since we published our last strategy, in 2011, the population in the county has increased, new communities have been created, and the digital world has become a central part of everyday life. How we access information and public services, connect with people and undertake learning has also changed, and continues to do so. These social and technological changes have all affected the way people use library services.

The council has invested over £30m in library buildings and technology, to ensure it provides a modern service that is adapted to meet today's user needs. Co-location of services into libraries and co-location of library services into other community venues has been developed, reflecting shifting community need and patterns of use. Libraries act as learning centres, community hubs and access points for council and community services.

Digital infrastructure has been improved, allowing response to rapid technological developments. Our libraries provide publicly accessible computers, software and Wi-Fi, with support for new users, as well as access to an increasing breadth of online content. Online access was especially important during the Covid-19 pandemic, when face-to-face services were unavailable, and those without access to computers and data were disadvantaged and looked to libraries for support. Demand from job seekers, benefit applicants, students, school children, researchers, and those lacking digital skills significantly increased, and remains high today.

The continued development of the digital world has not, however, led to the demise of the physical book. Since 2011, the number of titles published in the UK increased from 150,000 to over 200,000 a year. The level of physical book borrowing from our libraries has remained stable, whilst e-books, e-audio and e-magazines have added to our offer and increased in popularity.



Nottinghamshire's libraries and information service aims to be at the heart of Nottinghamshire communities and community life. To achieve this we will:

- **inspire** the enjoyment of books and reading;
- **create** knowledge and skills through access to learning, information and heritage;
- **stimulate**, curate and encourage arts, and creative and cultural activities;
- **connect** communities, people and services;
- **offer** excellent and inclusive customer service for all, every time.



# Service Offer

Our service will provide a core offer adapted to the different tiers of library across the network. This offer aligns with the national Universal Library Offers, coordinated by the sector support body, Libraries Connected, and covers seven service areas:

- 1 Community and Volunteering**
  - support community life, connections and activity
- 2 Culture and Creativity**
  - enabling access to and participation in a range of quality and diverse arts, creative and cultural experiences
- 3 Health and Wellbeing**
  - supporting people’s health and wellbeing through services that inform, engage, connect and prevent
- 4 Heritage**
  - collect, curate and tell the local Nottinghamshire story
- 5 Information and Digital**
  - ensuring access to quality information and digital services
- 6 Learning**
  - support learning new skills and access to a range of courses
- 7 Reading and Literacy**
  - building a literate and confident society through reading for pleasure by developing, delivering and promoting reading activities.



We have defined the differentiated core offer of each library tier at **APPENDIX 1**. Our core offer and model of service delivery is also linked to the needs assessment outlined in **APPENDIX 2**.



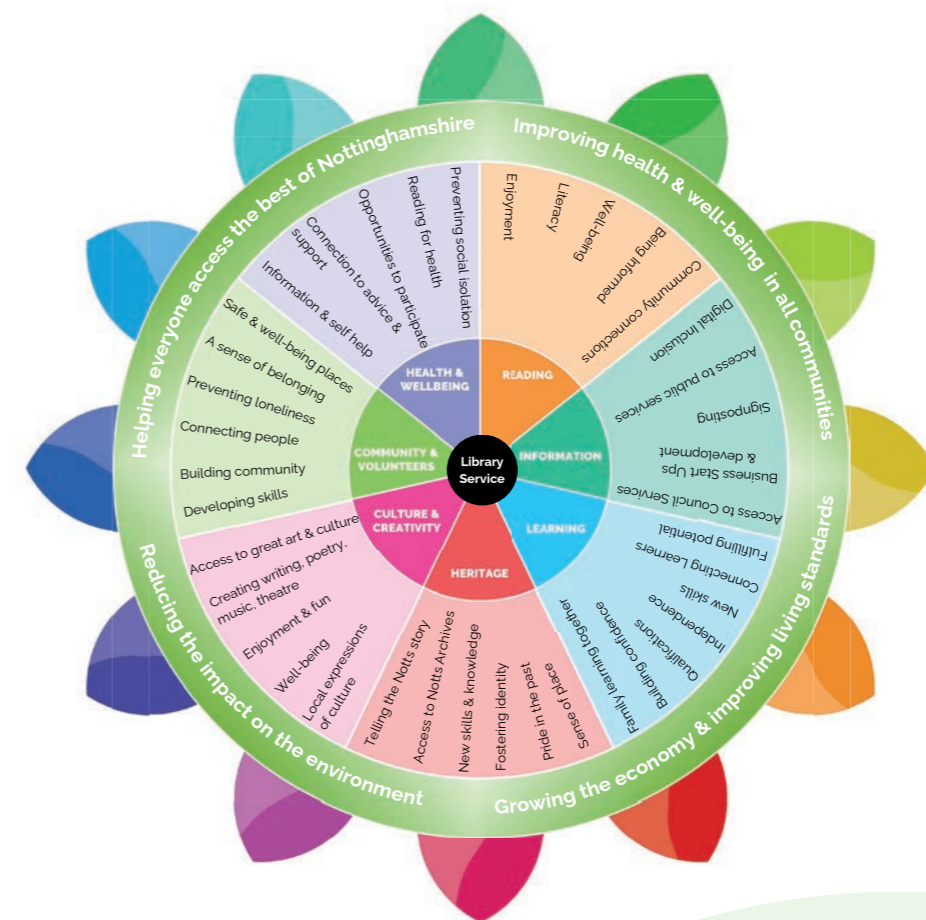
# Service Impact

Our libraries help to deliver the **Nottinghamshire Plan’s** four ambitions:

- Improving health and wellbeing in all our communities
- Growing our economy and improving living standards
- Reducing the County’s impact on the environment
- Helping everyone access the best of Nottinghamshire



The diagram below illustrates Nottinghamshire Libraries’ contribution to the plan, with the service offer at the centre; the outcomes the service contributes to in the middle sections and the outer layer referring to the plan’s ambitions.



Customer expectations are increasing, whilst available resources are constrained by challenging financial circumstances. Even in this difficult context, Nottinghamshire’s library service continues to receive a high customer satisfaction score and meets the Customer Service Excellence standard.

# Value and Impact Evidence

Measuring impact for the range of services a public library service provides is a challenge. While counting visits, attendances, book loans, and other simple numbers are useful performance indicators (as seen in **APPENDIX 3**), they do not fully capture the service's impact on users and communities. Recently published national research on public libraries in England, referenced in full at **APPENDIX 4**, helps to assess the return-on-investment and health and wellbeing impact of Nottinghamshire's library service. In **APPENDIX 5** we present a series of case studies of the impact and value of Nottinghamshire libraries.

## Return-on-Investment

The Suffolk Libraries Charity produced independent research to identify the social value of its work. The research analysed the range of Suffolk's service offer, which is very similar to Nottinghamshire's, to provide a financial value against each activity. This resulted in an assessment that for every £1 invested in the library service and its activities, the value of social return amounts to £6.07.

## Health and Wellbeing

The positive health and wellbeing impacts and outcomes for people who access a good public library service with a rich service offer have been the subject of significant research in recent years.

The council's prevention and early help approach to supporting a resilient, healthy Nottinghamshire seeks to create an early help and preventative offer for residents. The approach includes *'endorsing further work to develop libraries as community and learning hubs...'* and *'will support young children to develop language, reading and motor skills.'* Libraries will embed a *'Making Every Contact Count'* approach to ensure *'people and communities have access to brief advice and information on a range of prevention services.'*



# Delivery

## Our Delivery Model

In April 2016, the county council commissioned Inspire – Culture, Learning and Libraries, an independent Community Benefit Society with charitable status, to deliver a range of cultural, heritage, learning, library, and music services across Nottinghamshire. The library service is at the heart of this model, which has broadened services, drawn in additional funding, and met changing customer needs.

In our last strategy, we outlined a tiered library offer, and made a commitment to continue to provide an extensive network of library buildings, to maintain service access. Whilst that commitment stands, due to significant change in levels of use and customer demand, the current tiering system of delivery points and locations needs to be restated and adjusted to reflect a greater use of technology, more community and partner involvement and changes in opening hours and locations.

**APPENDIX 6** provides a full list of the locations in each tier, and **APPENDIX 7** plots these service points on a map. Below is a summary of the updated tiered model.

## Updated Tiered Service Model

### Hub Library

A hub library serves a major town and provides a comprehensive library service offer for at least six days a week. The site is run by paid staff, fully accessible and receives over 50,000 visits per year. A comprehensive reading, digital, health, learning, heritage, and cultural offer is available.

### Community Library

A community library serves a small town or urban area and provides a wide range of resources and services geared to the needs and profile of the community and is open for at least four days a week. The site is run by paid staff and supported by volunteers. A core reading, digital, health, learning and cultural offer will be developed to meet local needs.



# Action Plan



## Library Access Points

A library access point provides a core book loan service for smaller communities and individuals. This will typically be co-located in community buildings and be delivered in partnership with existing community organisations and volunteers. Communities will host an access point, pop up library or a mobile library. Book collections will be exchanged and updated on a regular basis. Book requests will be provided through the online catalogue or via telephone.

## Virtual and Online Library Service

This service is accessible online and via the telephone. It provides information and support in accessing both online and physical library services. Electronic books and resources, access to databases and the online library catalogue will be available 24/7.

## Staff, Partners and Volunteers

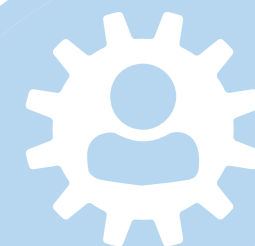
Library staff are key to the delivery of the library service across our network. The ongoing approach is to train and empower staff to develop, promote and deliver services and programmes. By reducing bureaucracy, centralising the telephone helpline and using the latest self-service technology, we aim to move staff away from transactional duties, creating capacity to support the delivery of the core offer. Local library staff are ideally placed to be the front door to local and council services, customise the offer to suit local needs and build new audiences.

The service works with many partners and partnerships to support community development, early help and information access. It also works with a growing number of volunteers, including through the Inspire Community Makers programme. This is not a way to replace paid staff, but a way to develop services and increase their impact. Whether they are indexing local history resources, stewarding a live music event, supporting an adult to learn to read, or looking after a green space, our volunteers enhance the offer available at their local library.



This action plan is designed to implement the aims of this strategy, meeting the Council's statutory duty and delivering and developing the library service.

REF	ACTION	Who	When
1	Develop an all Nottinghamshire Reading and Literacy Strategy.	Children's and Place departments Inspire Schools The Reading Agency UNESCO City of Literature Partners Sponsors / external funding	2025/2026
2	Develop and train library staff to further develop, deliver and promote the library offers – including use of library apprenticeship programme, in house training, sector and regional training and supported initiatives training e.g. Make Every Contact Count.	Inspire Council departments Partners Sector training bodies	Ongoing
3	Approve the updated County Council Library Stock Policy.	Place Department - Cultural Commissioning Inspire	Dec 2024 / Spring 2025
4	Review and explore new models and locations of library access points.	Place Department - Cultural Commissioning Inspire	Dec 2025
5	Develop libraries' information, signposting and referral role as the front door to council services and other public and community services.	Council departments Inspire District / borough council Health partners Voluntary / charity sector	2025
6	Undertake the new Library Development Framework (National Accreditation Scheme).	Inspire	TBC



REF	ACTION	Who	When
7	Identify an appropriate mechanism for future delivery of the library service.	Place Department - Cultural Commissioning	March 2028
8	Continue to invest to maintain buildings, digital infrastructure, and support bids to other sources of capital funding.	Place Department - Cultural Commissioning	Spring 2025
9	Develop a 'Green libraries' approach aligned with and in support of the council's Net Zero Framework, ensuring the service reduces its carbon footprint, promotes good environmental approaches, and further develops green initiatives such as Green Library Gardens.	Inspire	Ongoing
10	Use and exploit technology to maximise access to resources and the capacity of the service.	Inspire	Ongoing
11	Inspire to bid to continue to be an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2027/28 +.	Inspire to develop bid from Jan 2026	2027
12	The council and Inspire to continue to develop funding bids to develop and enhance the library service.	Place Department and Inspire	Ongoing

## The Library Core Offer by Tier

### The Libraries Core Offer

The core offer is the baseline service expectation for customers, described by library level.

#### Hub Libraries will:

##### Reading

- Provide free access to a range of diverse and inclusive reading resources.
- Create excitement around reading through imaginative participation in national reading initiatives.
- Support customers of all ages to read for pleasure through recommendations and enthusiasm for reading.
- Deliver the Summer Reading Challenge encouraging young readers.
- Promote and support BookStart.
- Offer one open and accessible adult reading event a month, supported by staff.
- Deliver two Under 5s events per week.
- Provide introductory class visits on demand.
- Provide children's book exchanges.
- Offer eight activities a year to encourage children's reading and library use.
- Provide a dedicated children's area.

##### Information, Learning, Heritage and Digital

- Offer free WiFi during opening hours.
- Support independent learning using online learning services that have free access e.g. Learn My Way.
- Actively signpost Inspire Learning courses offer.
- Offer and promote non-fiction resources.
- Support customers to use free public access IT.
- Promote Inspire's Picture Archive.
- Support the use of the library catalogue, online resources, and online services including Ancestry and British newspaper archive.
- Offer free information service via face to face, and via ASK.
- Support children's digital skills e.g., BBC Micro:Bit and Raspberry Pi.
- Provide support for customers to access heritage collections/materials for research into Nottinghamshire's story.







- Maintain the libraries' local study collections.
- Offer study space.

### **Culture and Creativity**

- Promote Inspire's central cultural programme across the estate through face-to-face customer engagement, recommendations, displays and sharing of promotional materials in the local area.
- Use centrally provided resources to offer creative activity to support the cultural programme.
- Host and actively support centrally programmed cultural events held in the library.
- Where applicable, use gallery/display areas to support the use of the spaces and ensure a high standard of display.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

- Positively promote the Reading Well collections, face to face and through displays and marketing materials.
- Provide free and supported access to health information.
- Promote targeted resources e.g. Memory Lane Bags.

- Promote and deliver one group per month to combat loneliness and improve wellbeing, meeting the need of the local community.

### **Community Libraries will:**

#### **Reading**

- Provide free access to a range of diverse and inclusive reading resources.
- Create excitement around reading through imaginative participation in national reading initiatives.
- Support customers of all ages to read for pleasure through recommendations and enthusiasm for reading.
- Deliver the Summer Reading Challenge encouraging young readers.
- Promote and support BookStart.
- Offer one adult reading activity a year.
- Provide a dedicated children's area.
- Deliver one Under 5s event per Month.
- Provide introductory class visits on demand.
- Provide children's book exchanges.
- Offer four activities a year to encourage children's reading and library use.

### **Information, Learning, Heritage and Digital**

- Offer free WiFi during opening hours.
- Support independent learning using online learning services that have free access e.g. Learn My Way.
- Actively signpost Inspire Learning courses offer.
- Offer and promotion of non-fiction resources.
- Support customers to use free public access IT.
- Promote Inspire's Picture Archive.
- Support the use of the library catalogue, online resources, and online services including Ancestry and British newspaper archive
- Offer free information service via face to face, and via ASK.
- Support children's digital skills e.g., BBC Micro:Bit and Raspberry Pi.
- Provide support for customers to access heritage collections/ materials for research into Nottinghamshire's story.

- Maintain the libraries' local study collections.
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- Provide free and supported access to health information.
- Promote targeted resources e.g. Memory Lane Bags.
- Promote and deliver one group per month to combat loneliness and improve wellbeing, meeting the need of the local community.

### Library Access Points will:

## Reading

- Provide free access to a range of diverse and inclusive reading resources.
- Deliver the Summer Reading Challenge encouraging young readers.
- Promote and support BookStart.
- Provide children's book exchanges.

## Information, Learning, Heritage and Digital

- Offer free WiFi during opening hours.
- Actively signpost Inspire Learning courses offer.
- Offer and promotion of non-fiction resources.
- Support customers to use free public access IT.
- Offer free information service via face to face, and via ASK.
- Provide the libraries' local study collections.

## Culture and Creativity

- Promote Inspire's central cultural programme across the estate through face-to-face customer engagement, recommendations, displays and sharing of promotional materials in the local area.

## Health and Wellbeing

- Provide free access to health information including Inspire website.

## Needs assessment

### About Nottinghamshire

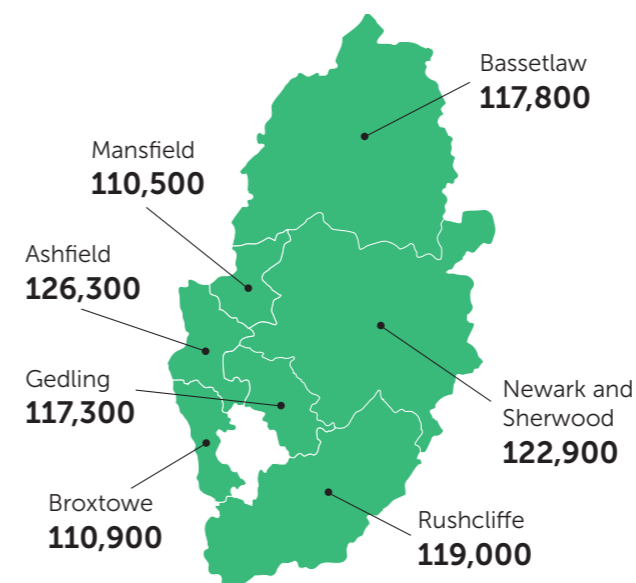
Key facts about Nottinghamshire - Nottinghamshire Insight

## Population

Nottinghamshire has an estimated population of **824,800** people (Census 2021).

In Nottinghamshire 20% (**168,500**) of the population are children (0-17 years old), 59% (**489,800**) are working age, 18-64 years old, and 21% (**175,100**) are over 65 years old.

### District population figures



The population of Nottinghamshire is slightly older than the national average, with 21% aged 65+ in 2020 compared with 18% in England. The median age of the population in Nottinghamshire in 2019 was **43.8** years compared to 40 years in England.

The total population of Nottinghamshire is expected to increase by some 67,000 persons to **895,000** from 2019 to 2031, an 8% increase. Between 2019 and 2041 the population is expected to increase by some 108,400 persons to **936,600** persons, an increase of 13%. The increase in population is due to an increase in net migration of people from both other areas of the UK and abroad, and an increase in life expectancy.

More older people in Nottinghamshire are anticipated to live alone; increasing by 41% between 2015 and 2030.

Black and minority ethnic (BME) populations are relatively low in Nottinghamshire, 4% compared with 15% nationally. BME populations in Nottinghamshire generally have a younger age profile than the general population (Census 2011)

People living within the more deprived areas of Nottinghamshire have higher levels of unemployment, lower levels of qualifications, fewer healthy lifestyle choices and poorer health and wellbeing outcomes compared with those in less deprived areas.

 Nottinghamshire population **824,800**





### Number of domestic properties

There are **360,290** domestic properties in Nottinghamshire.

**60%** of houses in Nottinghamshire are in Council Tax bands A and B

### Life expectancy and health

Life expectancy at birth for females is **82.6** years (2018-2020 data). Number of years healthy life expectancy at birth for females is **60.0** years (2018-2020 data).

Life expectancy at birth for males is **79.5** years (2018-2020 data). Number of years healthy life expectancy at birth for males is **62.4** years (2018-2020 data).

#### Key indicators for Nottinghamshire:

**60 years** is the average age when females report not being healthy, which is worse than the England average of 63.9 years. The average age that males in Nottinghamshire report not being healthy is **62.4 years**, which is similar to the England average of 63.1 years (2018-20).

Nottinghamshire is ranked 101 out of 151 upper tier local authorities in England in the index of multiple deprivation, 1 being most deprived.

23% of adults report feeling lonely always, often or some of the time. This is similar to the England average of 22%.

Local surveys have shown that the average estimated life satisfaction scores for Nottinghamshire are below the national average, but residents recognised and appreciated a stronger sense of community during the COVID-19 pandemic and are keen to see this built upon.

### Local insight from JSNA

- Communities want to be supported and involved in their own development and feel organisations are working alongside them.
- Communities want creative and flexible solutions to services and funding that can adapt to the communities ongoing and changing needs.
- It is important to have consistent, trusted community figures, as well as physical assets and social infrastructure.
- Sense of belonging increases with sense of pride and cleanliness, and transport is important for combating loneliness and building connections.

Please see **Nottinghamshire's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment** for more information about health and well-being in the county. The aim of a JSNA is to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and reduce inequalities for all ages.

### Deprivation

According to the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, Nottinghamshire is ranked **9th** most deprived out of 26 Shire Counties in England, and **101** most deprived out of **151** Upper Tier Local Authorities in England. Deprivation levels vary across Nottinghamshire, and Mansfield District and Ashfield Districts are the 56th and 63rd respectively most deprived Local Authority Districts (LAD) out of 317 lower tier Local Authorities in England. On the other hand, Rushcliffe District is ranked **314** least deprived out of **317** lower tier Local Authorities in England.

In Nottinghamshire there are **31** areas, known as LSOAs, in the 10% most deprived areas in England. The most deprived areas are concentrated in the districts of Ashfield (x12), Mansfield (x10), Bassetlaw (x5) and Newark & Sherwood (x3).

### Employment

Nottinghamshire's employment rate is **74.7%**. This is the number of people that are employed as a percentage of all those that are working age, i.e. 16-64 years old. The UK rate is 75%. 108,300 working age adults are economically inactive, 29,100 due to sickness.

### Education and skills

Final KS4 data for 2019 shows **45.4%** of pupils achieved a strong pass (grades 9-5) in both GCSE English and mathematics which represents a slight fall of 0.2 percentage points from 2018. Nationally over the same period 43.4% of state funded schools achieved this measure which is a 0.1 percentage point fall. Nottinghamshire is placed **54th** against all local authorities nationally (a slight fall from 52nd in 2018).

At the standard pass (grades 9-4) final data shows **67.6%** of Nottinghamshire pupils achieved grades 9-4 in both English and mathematics, an increase of 1.0 percentage points on 2018. Nationally there was a slight increase of 0.5 percentage points to 64.9%.

Comparisons with all authorities nationally place Nottinghamshire **47th** (53rd in 2018). 67.6% of pupils attending Nottinghamshire schools achieved GCSE English and Mathematics grades 9-4 compared to 65.0% nationally. (Academic year 2018/19)

In 2023 those with level 1 to level 4 qualifications and above are slightly better than the East Midlands averages, but in all cases lower than the national average.

Those with no qualifications 7.5% (36,700) are higher than the national average of 6.5%.



**360,290**  
Domestic homes



 Nottinghamshire employment rate  
**74.7%**

## District – Mosaic profiles (2022)

Area profiles - Nottinghamshire Insight

### Ashfield

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37ygBz](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37ygBz)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

H	H - Aspiring Homemakers
I	I - Family Basics
M	H - Modest Traditions

### Bassetlaw

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37y0zm](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37y0zm)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

D	H - Rural Reality
C	C - Country Living
H	H - Aspiring Homemakers

### Broxtowe

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37LNie](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37LNie)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

E	E - Senior Security
H	H - Aspiring Homemakers
G	G - Domestic Success

### Gedling

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37L1ND](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37L1ND)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

H	H - Aspiring Homemakers
E	E - Senior Security
G	G - Domestic Success

### Mansfield

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MdkP](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MdkP)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

I	I - Family Basics
H	H - Aspiring Homemakers
E	E - Senior Security

### Newark & Sherwood

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MrBV](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MrBV)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

D	D - Rural Reality
C	C - Country Living
H	H - Aspiring Homemakers

### Rushcliffe

[www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MGQ0](http://www.nottinghaminsight.org.uk/d/aa37MGQ0)

The three Mosaic Groups with the largest proportion of households are:

G	G - Domestic Success
B	B - Prestige Positions
C	C - Country Living

Details of mosaic groups and types can be found [www.nottinghamshireinsight.org.uk/research-areas/mosaic-and-customer-insight/mosaic-groups-and-types/](http://www.nottinghamshireinsight.org.uk/research-areas/mosaic-and-customer-insight/mosaic-groups-and-types/)



## Digital Inclusion

Statistics show that an estimated 7.8% of UK adults have either never used the internet, or last used it over three months ago. That's 4.2 million people ([Office for National Statistics, 2020](#)). Furthermore, 21% of UK adults, or 11 million people, do not have the [essential digital skills](#) needed for day-to-day life.

In Ashfield 27% have no laptop, 12% no internet access at home and 30% have no digital skills for life as outlined in the Digital Inclusion in Ashfield District report May 2020 by Citizens Online. The 2018 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index indicated that 21% of UK citizens lack the full basic digital skills, indicating the situation in Ashfield is significantly worse than the national average.

The 2021 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index report indicates that 95% of people are now online, highlighting that the 12% in Ashfield with no internet access is significantly worse than the national average.

If the Ashfield statistics were applied to the rest of Nottinghamshire, then 199,470 adults don't have essential digital skills and 43,234 homes do not have internet access.



## Reading and Literacy

The National Literacy Trust and Libraries Connected published a joint report '[Public Libraries and Literacy Recovery in 2022](#)'. The report brought together key research in the area.

It concluded '*low literacy affects outcomes beyond economic impact: low literacy is linked to poor health, with 43% of working-age adults in England lacking the literacy skills they need to understand and make use of everyday health information (known as 'health literacy')*' (Rowlands et al., 2016).

*... people with low literacy are up to 18 times more likely to take their prescriptions incorrectly, three times more likely to rate their health as "very poor" (34% vs 11%) and significantly less likely to understand symptoms of a medical condition such as diabetes or asthma (Morrisroe, 2014).*

*Ultimately, poor literacy skills can even be linked with lower life expectancy, with children born into communities with the most serious literacy challenges having some of the lowest life expectancies in England (Gilbert et al, 2018).'*

*'Importantly, the benefits of literacy are most powerfully realised when reading for pleasure is appreciated as a vital ingredient of literacy. Reading for pleasure supports increased literacy skills by vocabulary growth and increasing reading fluency to such an extent that recent research has shown that if all school-aged children in the UK read for pleasure every day, the number getting five good GCSEs by the age of 16 could increase by 1.1 million within 30 years (British Land, 2021).'*



## Children and Young People's Literacy and Reading

In 2023, (12.4%) of children who receive free school meals do not have a book of their own, this was an increase from 9.7% in 2022.

Just over two in five children and young people aged 8 - 18 (43.4%) said they enjoyed reading in their free time 2023. This is the lowest level of reading enjoyment since the national literacy trust began the survey in 2005. Fewer boys said they enjoyed reading than girls. Children receiving free school meals were less likely to enjoy reading. The East Midlands had the lowest level (39.9%) of reading enjoyment, compared to Greater London who had the highest level (51.5%).

The survey also asked about access to places to read and study at home. 20.8% of children didn't have quiet space to read, and 18.6% had nowhere to write, draw or do homework.

## Adult Literacy and Reading

It is estimated that up to nine million adults in the UK have literacy issues, with up to 40% of the adult population in the most disadvantaged wards facing literacy challenges. This undermines local economic and community development. Low parental literacy is also a limiting factor in raising pupil attainment.

In England, 16.4% of adults, or 7.1 million people, can be described as having "very poor literacy skills." ie being functionally illiterate – National Literacy Trust.

Therefore 109,043 (16.4% of the adult population) adults in Nottinghamshire have very poor literacy.

2.4 million adults in England cannot read at all – Read Easy [readeasy.org.uk](http://readeasy.org.uk)

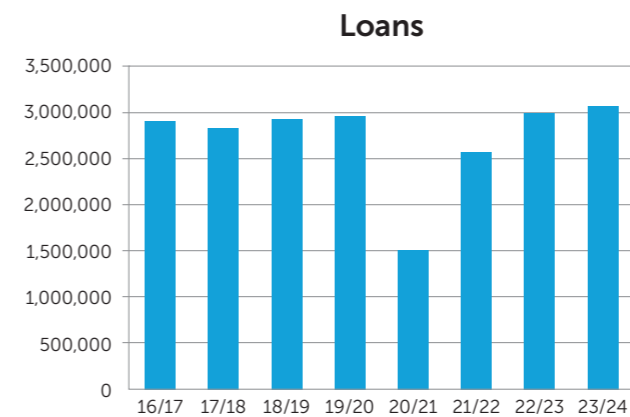
Prison education statistics (2021) indicate that 57% of adult prisoners have literacy levels below a reading age of 11. [Prison Education Statistics 2019 - 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/prison-education-statistics-2019-2020)

## Library Data and Trends

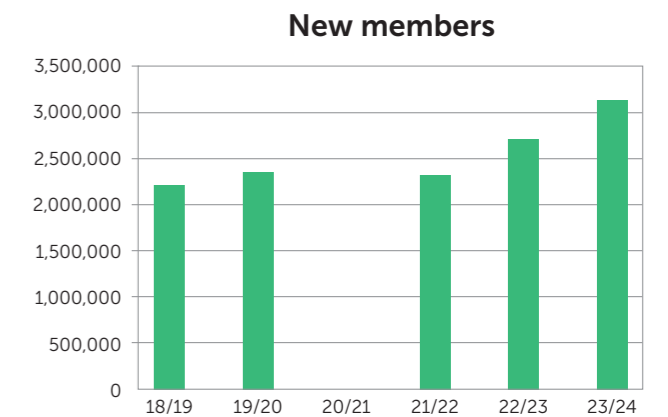
### Visits in 2023/24 by Tier of Library



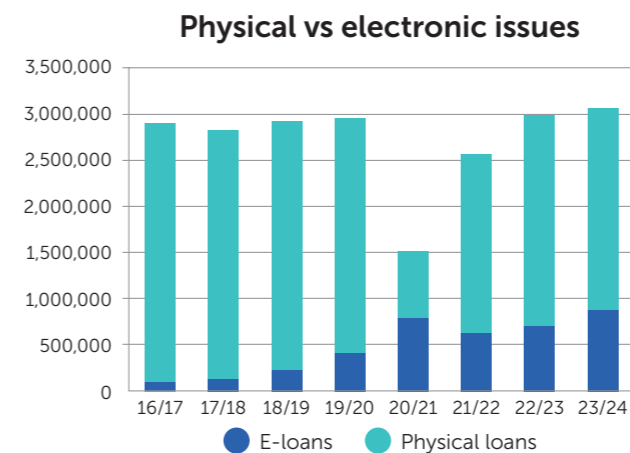
### Trend Data



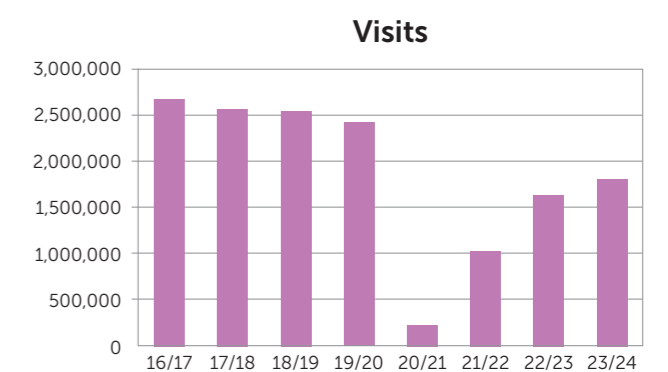
Library of books and other materials has increased steadily post-Covid.



The number of new members is showing a steady increase each year.



The proportion of electronic loans is on an upward trend.



The number of physical visits is increasing post Covid.



## Background Papers

Brave Bears – Project Report 2023 – Inspire / Miner2Major – Nottinghamshire County Council [Knit, Crochet & Craft in Libraries | Inspire - Culture, Learning, Libraries \(inspireculture.org.uk\)](#)

Children and young people's book ownership in 2023 – National Literacy Trust [Book\\_ownership\\_in\\_2023\\_k6ovlWY.pdf \(cdn.ngo\)](#)

Children and young people's reading in 2023 – National Literacy Trust [Reading\\_trends\\_2023.pdf \(cdn.ngo\)](#)

Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0 – Libraries as engines of economic recovery and growth. British Library July 2023 [Democratising Entrepreneurship | Arts Council England](#)

Digital Inclusion in Ashfield District report May 2020 by Citizens Online

Green Libraries Partnership Programme phase1/1B final report May 2024 \_ CILIP (see page 15 for case study)

Health, Wealthy and Wise. [Healthy, Wealthy and Wise: The impact of adult learning across the UK - Learning and Work Institute](#)

I AM A Reader project – Evaluation report – The Reading Agency – Inspire – Arts Council England – Nottinghamshire County Council – August 2024

Inspiring Early Years – Supporting early years development through cultural events in libraries. Ann Langston. Inspire 2023 <https://online.fliphtml5.com/ydjjq/snly/>

JSNA 2024 – Community Centred Approaches [Appendix A - JSNA Profile Pack - Community-Centred Approaches to Health and Wellbeing.pdf \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

JSNA 2-24 – Prevention and Equity in Adult Social Care [Appendix A - JSNA Profile Pack - Prevention and Equity in Adult Social Care.pdf \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Libraries Deliver Libraries Deliver: [Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Libraries for living, and for living better June 2023 [Libraries for Living, and for Living Better | Libraries Connected](#)

Library Services Peer Review Inspire and Nottinghamshire County Council – Local Government Association. February 2021

Local Government Association Peer Review of the Library Service. Report to Nottinghamshire County Council Communities Committee. 19 July 2021



Nottinghamshire Libraries Strategy December 2011 [libraries-strategy.pdf \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](#)

[Prison education statistics 2019–2020](#), Ministry of Justice, August 2021.

Public Libraries and Literacy Recovery – National Literacy Trust 2022 [Public Libraries and Literacy Recovery | National Literacy Trust](#)

Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/pdfs/ukpga\\_19640075\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/pdfs/ukpga_19640075_en.pdf)

Sanderson Review January 2024  
An independent review of English public libraries - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Suffolk Libraries – An impact analysis of services January 2023 [Measuring our impact \(suffolklibraries.co.uk\)](#)

The Nottinghamshire Plan 2021 – 2031 - [The Nottinghamshire Plan: Our plan for a healthy, prosperous and greener Nottinghamshire](#)

The power of reading : unlocking the benefits of reading for people living with dementia – July 2024 – The Reading Agency

The Universal Library Offers 2019 [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#)



## Impact Case Studies

## Health and Wellbeing

Our libraries support health and wellbeing in many ways, from health information in our health hubs, visiting groups providing services in libraries, to a range of community activities that alleviate loneliness. Interactions with our caring and perceptive staff can have incredibly positive consequences:

*"I love this library and have become a regular user of the coffee morning service. I have a terminally ill husband who has recently been taken into a care home. I have so many reasons to give up. Until I met your staff member I wanted to end my life, she has been my life line, taking the time to talk to me, listen and even make me a cuppa. You can see she genuinely cares not just for me but everyone. she even puts books aside when she knows I am coming as I deal with depression and fatigue and sometimes cannot face doing this task. She is an asset to your library and has worked wonders here. I want to live, I feel I can talk rather than keep it inside, my mental health lifts whenever I am at the library and I have comfort."*

A mother benefited from library Rattle, Rhyme and Roll sessions:

*"When attending the Rattle Rhyme and Roll session the parent said that she was very nervous and had never done anything like this before with her 4-week-old baby but wanted him to have better experiences than she'd had. She was also worried that he wasn't old enough, but we reassured her that he definitely was! A few days earlier the customer joined herself and her baby to the library, she had never been in a library before. After the RRR session she seemed more confident, was chatting to other mums and said that she would definitely come again and had enjoyed it. This has improved her social skills and will improve her wellbeing."*

The I AM A Reader Arts Council funded project surveyed over 500 Nottinghamshire library readers to find out if they viewed the act of reading as a creative process. The survey also identified wider benefits of the act of reading, which included increased learning, empathy, wellbeing and relaxation.

One reader said about the wider benefits of reading -

*"Even though the words are already printed, the process of taking in the printed words is a form of meditation which I feel calms me and allows me to creatively process the information I'm reading...."*



## Reading and Literacy

Providing excellent book choice, both physically and digitally, is at the heart of the service. Our electronic services have widened access for a lot of people and is a growing market, supporting customers such as a customer having cancer treatment, who "listened to about 150 books during the time and found the service invaluable".

Our staff, in helping customers choose their reading, add extra value to the experience:

*"A mum was thanking me for my help in choosing some books for her reluctant daughter to read. Of the five different ones I had picked out, her daughter had loved three of them and had also asked to buy a book at her school book fair. Apparently, something she had never been interested in before."*

*"I've lost count of the books that stay as part of me – altering my behaviour and my attitudes".*

*"Reading opens the mind to new ideas, new insights and new possibilities..."*

Many adults struggle with hidden poor literacy and through Inspire Community Makers volunteering and in partnership with the adult education service, the library service has developed an adult reading scheme on offer in libraries. Feedback has been really positive, and for some life changing.

*'The course (adult reading scheme) has been helping me since the death of my wife ... now I want to learn to read and do the paper work .. I'm getting better and better '*

Reading Well collections in libraries support individuals to understand and manage their health and wellbeing using helpful reading. Collections cover a variety of areas, including dementia, and is a good example of a high quality national initiative that Nottinghamshire participates in that is demonstrated through evidence to deliver positive health outcomes, and which Nottinghamshire citizens benefit from:

*'How wonderful to have all these titles in libraries – I thought we were alone'*  
(Reading Well with Dementia borrower)





## Information and Digital

Our libraries offer important signposting for information and help, whether through the services of Ask Inspire, via telephone or email, or directly in libraries. These can be little things that really make a difference to people, such as a customer who was struggling to find some information about hearing aid batteries. The customer now knows where to find the supply she needs. Libraries routinely provide help with IT, such as with CVs and printing documents. This can go further, such as with a customer who received support from staff about improving her job application and tips on interview preparation. The customer successfully obtained a job.

Libraries also give targeted information and support through the Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) information service. Staff have supported a local entrepreneur to use library resources and databases to transform her initial business idea of creating a Community Interest Company to support neurodivergent communities into a viable business model.

As local information centres libraries are uniquely placed to present and find information. Libraries offer information about council services, local services, groups and organisations, as well as tourist information.

*'I was organising a visit for my local WI to a part of Nottinghamshire I didn't know, and the local library was the place I gathered all the ideas and information I need.'*

## Learning

Libraries support learning in several ways, including through provision of free access to the internet, use of computers and community learning courses. There are still many people in Nottinghamshire who don't have IT facilities at home, including one adult learner who without the library he would not have been able to complete his course. He gained a distinction.

Staff offer support in many ways to customers.

*"One of our customers came in often to ask for help with her homework in order to gain an apprenticeship. She struggled with dyslexia and found reading and understanding the often-complicated material quite difficult. Several of us, staff and volunteers, spent quite a lot of time with her over a period of a few months. She eventually gained her apprenticeship in catering, passed the course, and recently found a position as a qualified chef in a hospital."*

The adult and community learning service aims to deliver the majority of its open courses through the library network, thus enhancing the overall library offer greatly.



## Heritage

Providing access to and creating inspiration from Nottinghamshire's heritage is an important part of libraries' work. This can include helping with local studies enquiries;

*"A gentleman came in looking for information about his grandfather who is on the local war memorial. We were able to find and print off details for him. He said it really made his day, and that it was the first picture he had ever seen of his grandfather."*

Many people come and access the local history resources that the library service subscribe to, that would be prohibitively expensive for individuals to access –

*"Don't know what we'd do without the library".*

## Culture and Creativity

Libraries offer a huge range of both centrally and locally programmed activities. Creativity is a major theme of libraries, with local craft activities and groups happening across children and adult audiences in Nottinghamshire libraries.

One example of a truly far-reaching project is our annual knitting charity project. Each year an army of crafters have been prepared to generously give their time, skills, wool and creativity to a charitable cause. At the end, crafting contributors amaze library visitors with an exhibition which demonstrates a "joyous and heart-warming array of knitted fabulousness..." Participating benefits participants, promotes crafting and ends with outcomes that will help communities.

*"What a fabulous project. The skills in Nottinghamshire are kept alive and bound to inspire new knitters. Such an important thing to keep craft alive."*

In addition, high quality cultural activity from Jazz in Libraries to children's theatre, ensembles in libraries introducing children to classical music to under 5s arts projects, are programmed throughout the year.

*"Very informative, educational and good way to inspire kids to show interest in music."*







## Community and Volunteering

Volunteering through our libraries has increased exponentially due to our Inspire Community Makers volunteering programme. Volunteering is known to benefit both the organisation and the individual, as seen with a customer who was new to the county and wanted to volunteer at one of our libraries to make friends and connections to the community. The customer became the Places of Welcome volunteer for several months, gained confidence, and has just got a full-time job.

Libraries offer safe spaces in communities where people feel welcome and safe:

*"A regular customer who brings her children to Rhyme Rattle and roll sessions came to thank us for being a 'safe space' and so understanding of her children's needs. And also for being so helpful with knowing how to help and what to say. The customer has had a difficult time this year with her two pre schoolers. She has often felt judgement in shops and cafes because of their needs but has started popping into the library even more because she feels we are a safe space and she can talk to us and we understand ...."*

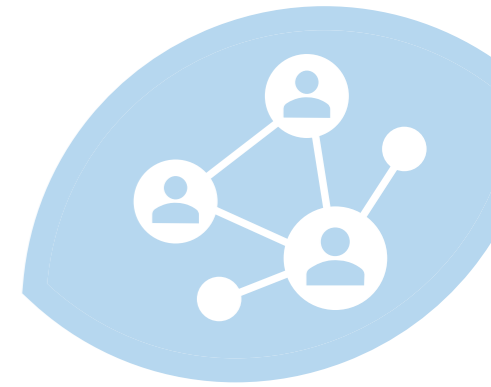
Members of staff know their regular customers well:

*"I had noticed that one of our regulars hadn't been in for a few days. So I telephoned his home to see if he was ok as I knew he hadn't been well. His wife informed me that he had had a fall and was in hospital. She hadn't been able to phone the hospital for information as she is elderly and struggles on the phone to hear or understand. I offered to phone them for her to get some answers, she was extremely happy for the help. Her husband also thanked me when he was home and said how kind we are here."*

Combatting loneliness and connecting people is an everyday activity across our libraries.

At a group session, a volunteer spoke about the impact the session has for both dementia sufferers and carers *'the session gets him out and gives relief to people at home who care for him – you can get depressed if you are in on your own all the time..'*

Another Community Maker volunteer said the new role had *'Helped me to cope again, with my disability I have felt a bit useless, but now a new lease of life, ...new confidence, it has helped me mentally to cope more and enjoy life .. don't feel useless anymore.'*



## Library Network Tiers

- **Hub Libraries x 12**  
Arnold, Beeston, Bingham, Hucknall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Mansfield, Newark, Retford, Southwell, Sutton in Ashfield, West Bridgford and Worksop.
- ▲ **Community Libraries x 20**  
Blidworth, Burton Joyce, Calverton, Carlton, Cotgrave, Eastwood, East Leake, Edwinstowe, Forest Town, Harworth and Bircotes, Keyworth, Kimberley, Mansfield Woodhouse, Mapperley, Ollerton, Radcliffe, Ravenshead, Ruddington, Stapleford and Warsop.
- + **Library Access Points / Mobile Locations x 28**  
Annesley Woodhouse, Balderton, Balmoral, Bilsthorpe, Carlton Hill, Carlton in Lindrick, Clipstone, Collingham, Dukeries, Edgewood, Farnsfield, Gedling, Gotham, Huthwaite, Inham Nook, Jacksdale, Ladybrook, Langold, Lowdham, Misterton, Rainworth, Selston, Skegby, Sutton Bonington, Sutton on Trent, Toton, Tuxford and Woodthorpe.  
  
Mobile library service - [Mobile Libraries | Inspire - Culture, Learning, Libraries \(inspireculture.org.uk\)](http://inspireculture.org.uk)



### Virtual and Online Library Service

**ASK Inspire**  
01623 677 200

**Online Library**  
[www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/search-reserve-and-renew/](http://www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/search-reserve-and-renew/)

**E-reading and E-listening**  
[www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/digital/](http://www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/digital/)

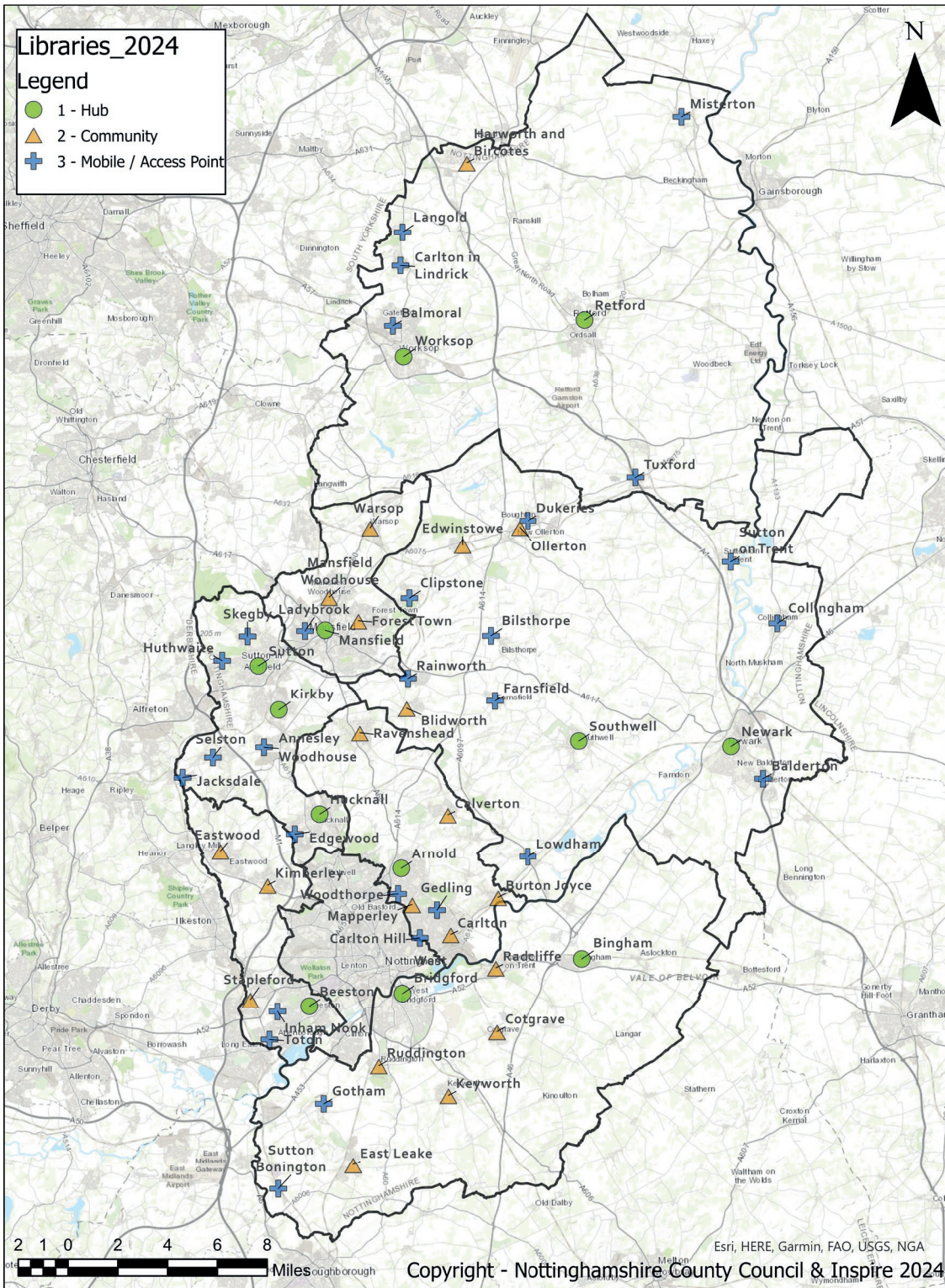
**Home library service**  
[www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/libraries/home-library-service/](http://www.inspireculture.org.uk/reading-information/libraries/home-library-service/)

# Appendix

# 7



## Nottinghamshire Library Network Map





**Nottinghamshire  
County Council**

**W** [nottinghamshire.gov.uk](http://nottinghamshire.gov.uk)  
**T** 0300 500 80 80

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