

ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26



MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

It's a privilege to present the 2025/26 annual report for London Libraries – a collective of all 33 library services working together to champion reading, learning, wellbeing and creativity across our Capital. This network is one of London's greatest strengths, and it has been an honour to serve as its Chair over the past year.

This year we have developed a strategic approach for London Libraries, Libraries for Living: Creative and Healthy Places for Education, Learning and Inspiration, which we have been developing since September 2025. The engagement for this work has drawn reflections and ideas from across London Libraries working with Cultural Associates Oxford. During the engagement there were over twenty-one to one interviews with key stakeholders; an online survey with the Executive Committee and an online members survey receiving over 200 responses from London Libraries staff.

This piece of work will be a great springboard for London Libraries to advocate and raise awareness of the value of what we all do across London. The aim of the work was to

- Align the network with the strategic direction of key stakeholders
- Unlock potential by strengthening advocacy potential and approach
- Help make the case for investment across the network
- Maximise funding potential through untapped opportunities and partners.

Three core priorities were agreed upon

- **One London Voice: Regional Collaboration Delivering Excellence Locally** - Working together to ensure we remain relevant to our communities and provide services that are vital to everyone's lives
- **A Skilled, Confident and Representative Workforce** - Building the workforce whose expertise makes everything else deliverable
- **Evidence, Insight and Advocacy** - Gathering evidence regionally and locally, providing insight, speaking with a compelling and unified voice to the decision-makers.

London Libraries will focus on these priorities over the next 3-5 years to strengthen its position and to champion the impact of our work at every level. We are building strong connection with the Greater London Authority and hope this further supports the network of libraries across London.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to this year's achievements: our funders, partners, volunteers, and the exceptional library leaders and staff across London. I am especially grateful to the Executive team for their dedication and wisdom, offered so generously alongside already demanding roles.

With warm regards,

Fiona Tarn - Chair, London Libraries (2025/26)

ABOUT US

London Libraries is the regional network for Libraries Connected, representing all 32 London boroughs and the City of London. Together, we collaborate on shared projects, champion our members' work, and advocate for the vital role of public libraries in London.

We support Libraries Connected's vision by promoting inclusive, modern, innovative and sustainable library services. Through strong partnerships, shared learning, and collective problem-solving, we drive improvement and stand with one another through both opportunities and challenges.

London is home to the largest public library network of any major world city, with more than 300 libraries serving over eight million residents.

Wherever you are in London, you are never far from a public library!



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

25/26



Physical Visitors

33,455,822

(based on data set of 33 library services)



Borrowing

37,123,632

(based on data set of 33 library services)



Volunteers

4,610

(based on data set of 32 library services)



PC & WIFI

6,424,507

(based on data set of 28 library services)



Active Users

994,621

(based on data set of 30 library services)

OUR PROJECTS

LondonVerse

Alongside the upgraded Read-ON app for the National Year of Reading, we proudly launched Londonverse, an inspiring digital poetry collection featuring more than 400 poems from 31 library services across London. Bringing together voices from across the capital, the project celebrates creativity, community and the unique stories that libraries help to nurture. We look forward to using Londonverse to mark National Poetry Day on 1 October 2026 and to sharing these voices with an even wider audience.



OUR PROJECTS

National Recognition for London's Library Teams

The innovation, creativity and dedication of London's library workforce continued to receive national recognition this year. At the annual **Libraries Connected Awards**, **Newham Libraries** won the **Information and Digital Offer Award**, while **Muhammad Haque** of **Barking and Dagenham Libraries** was recognised with the **Vision and Print Impaired People's Promise Award**, celebrating outstanding work to improve accessibility and inclusion.

London library services also achieved notable success in the first round of the Arts Council England **Libraries Development Framework**. **Newham**, **Vision Redbridge**, **Wandsworth** and **Westminster** were recognised for demonstrating how libraries can positively impact local communities through the effective use of data, community consultation and co-design. Their success highlights the sector's commitment to evidence-based service development and to ensuring that library services continue to respond to the needs and aspirations of local residents.

Further recognition came through prestigious regional and national awards. **Southwark Libraries** was named the **Bookseller's Library of the Year – London Region**, while **Vision Redbridge Libraries** won the **Health and Wellbeing Award** at the **Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards**. These achievements showcase the breadth and quality of work taking place across London's libraries and underline the sector's growing contribution to health, wellbeing, learning, culture and community life.

Collectively, these awards provide powerful evidence of the impact of London's libraries, recognising the expertise of library staff and helping to raise the profile of public libraries as essential community assets. They celebrate innovation, share best practice across the sector and strengthen advocacy for continued investment in services that support residents and enrich communities across the capital.

OUR PROJECTS

GLA and Loved & Wanted

Another significant achievement this year was securing funding through the GLA's Loved & Wanted Fund. The programme will see 18 library services become **Loved & Wanted** spaces, delivering information events, multilingual resources, staff training in multilingual storytelling, and a tour of the **Quilt of Welcome** alongside a range of community activities.

The funding will enable libraries to reach new audiences, support residents more effectively, and strengthen their role as welcoming and inclusive community hubs. It will also equip library staff with new skills and resources, helping them to engage diverse communities and celebrate the richness of London's cultures and languages.

At the same time, our relationship with the GLA has continued to strengthen. Greater alignment between London Libraries priorities and GLA objectives has increased recognition of the power of libraries to support thriving communities, champion inclusion and play a vital role in place-making in London.



OUR PROJECTS

London Libraries Website

We further enhanced the London Libraries website, adding new resources linked to our city wide campaigns which include the **National Year of Reading, Loved & Wanted**, and **Artificial Intelligence**, alongside a growing collection of case studies from across the capital. The site has become an important resource for library staff, supporting shared learning and sector collaboration, while also acting as a powerful advocacy tool. By showcasing the innovation, creativity and community impact of London's libraries, it helps raise the profile of public library services, reach new audiences and champion the vital role libraries play in people's lives.

Shared Learning and Development Opportunities

London Libraries has continued to work collaboratively to maximise training and development opportunities for staff across the capital. **Shared programmes**, including **Active Bystander** and **Conflict Resolution training**, have helped develop skills, build confidence and support libraries in creating safe, inclusive and welcoming spaces for all. This collaborative approach enables services to share expertise, achieve greater value from training investment and strengthen the skills of the library workforce. Further shared learning opportunities are planned for 2026/27 as we continue to invest in our people and the quality of services they deliver.

OUR PROJECTS

Innovate, Shape, Create: Supercharging London's Libraries

Our annual London Libraries conference brought together library leaders and staff from across the capital to share learning, celebrate achievement and shape the future of library services.

Highlights included an inspiring keynote from **Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho** and a series of Ignite presentations showcasing the innovation and impact of library teams. The conference also led directly to the creation of a new London Libraries AI Working Group, which is developing guidance and support to help frontline staff respond confidently to the growing role of AI in residents' lives.

The event strengthened collaboration across the network, promoted the sharing of best practice and continued to position London's libraries at the forefront of innovation and service development.



PRIORITIES FOR 26/27

Looking ahead, London Libraries remains focused on delivering the priorities set out in our Strategic Plan and building on the strong foundations established this year. A key milestone will be the delivery of a London-wide staff conference at Canada Water Library, providing opportunities for learning, collaboration and the sharing of best practice across the network.

We will also continue to seek new partnerships and explore innovative opportunities that support our shared ambitions. By working collaboratively and embracing new ideas, we will strengthen the impact of London's libraries, support our workforce and ensure libraries remain at the heart of thriving communities across the capital.



OUR TEAM

Our Executive team is made up of Heads of Service who are responsible for 12 London library authorities between them.

They meet 4 times a year to set the strategic direction for the network, ensuring libraries in London are aware of and participating in national initiatives and benefitting from joint programmes.

The wider general membership meets 4 times a year. In 2025/26 the team was made up of the following Officers:

Executive Officers

Fiona Tarn - Chair (Camden)

Susanna Barnes - Vice Chair (Lambeth)

Rachel Levy - Treasurer (City of London)

Daniel Waller - Secretary (Hammersmith & Fulham)

Committee Members

Anita Luby - (Past Chair, Redbridge)

Hannah Richens - (Barnet)

Caroline Rae - (Newham)

Rebecca Gediking - (GLL-Bromley, Greenwich & Wandsworth)

Amit Baghat – (Brent)

Praveen Manghani – (Southwark)

Universal Offer Leads

The following officers are the regional Universal Offer leads

Books and Reading

Daniel Waller and Muhammad Haque

Culture and Creativity

Rebecca Gediking and Anita Luby

Digital & Information

Caroline Rae and Susanna Barnes

Health

Claire Powell & Darren Deeks

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

We are grateful to the following organisations for their support with projects in the year:

- Libraries Connected
- Arts Council England
- Library On / British Library
- Novellic
- Greater London Authority
- City of London



ACCOUNTS

Our finances are maintained by Libraries Connected and are audited by an independent auditor as part of their annual audit.

Accounts			
Financial Year 25/26	Opening / Closing Balance	Income	Expenditure
Opening Balance	£37,367.79		
Regional income precepts			
24/25		£188.82	
25/26		£4,690.32	
26/27		£1,629.12	
LL Conference surplus 2024 and 2025		£11,456.49	
Londonverse Contributions		£3,300.00	
Consultancy (CAO)			£4,162.50
IT Software and Subscriptions			£3,420.00
Printing, Postage and Stationery (London Libraries Banners)			£280.00
Total		£21,264.75	£ 7,862.50
Closing Balance	£50,770.04		

Grants Received on behalf of London Libraries

Library On – Read On App £30,000. Held by the City of London.
GLA Loved and Wanted £60,000 Held by Libraries Connected