



BRIEFING PAPER

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Public libraries

By John Woodhouse &
Noel Dempsey

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Summary

The *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* requires local authorities in England and Wales to “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service”.

“Comprehensive and efficient” are not defined. It is the responsibility of each library authority to determine how to deliver public library services in the context of local need. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport can order an inquiry where there is concern that a local authority is not fulfilling its duties under the Act. This has not happened since 2009 when an inquiry looked at the library services provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.

Concerns about the impact of funding cuts on library services are ongoing and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals has launched a “My Library By Right” campaign. This is calling for the public’s “rights to libraries to be recognised and respected” and for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to carry out its duties under the 1964 Act.

The issue of library closures has been contentious. The DCMS has said that it does not “commission specific information” on how many have closed. However, in a February 2016 parliamentary response, the DCMS estimated that 110 static public libraries closed in England between January 2010 and January 2016 while at least 77 new public libraries had opened.

CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals) has challenged the net reduction of 33 libraries implied by the DCMS response. CILIP points to figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) of a net reduction of 178 libraries in England between 2009-10 and 2014-15. CIPFA define a library as one which is open for at least 10 hours per week.

An Appendix to this Paper gives some statistics on library visits, book loans, service points, internet access, and the number of employees and volunteers working in libraries. These have been compiled from CIPFA statistics.

1. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964

The main legislation governing public libraries in England and Wales is the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*.¹

Under section 7(1) of the 1964 Act, every library authority must “provide a comprehensive and efficient library service”. In fulfilling this duty, library authorities must take into account the desirability of:

- (a) ...securing, by the keeping of adequate stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means, that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to, books and other printed matter, and pictures, gramophone records, films and other materials, sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements and any special requirements both of adults and children; and
- (b) ...encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service, and of providing advice as to its use and of making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using it; and
- (c) ...securing, in relation to any matter concerning the functions both of the library authority as such and any other authority whose functions are exercisable within the library area, that there is full co-operation between the persons engaged in carrying out those functions.²

“Comprehensive and efficient” are not defined. It is the responsibility of each library authority to determine how to deliver public library services in the context of local need.³

¹ In Scotland, local authorities have a statutory duty, under s163(2) of the *Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973*, to “secure the provision of adequate library facilities for all persons resident in their area”

² *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* s7(2)

³ [HL4368 on public libraries](#), answered 14 December 2015

2. The role of the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

The 1964 Act imposes a duty on the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to:

(...) superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in England and Wales, and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them as library authorities by or under this Act.⁴

Section 17 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish an annual report on the exercise of his functions under the Act. The most recent [report](#) was published in December 2015.⁵

Power to order local inquiries

Under section 10 of the Act, the Secretary of State can order a local inquiry where he receives complaints that a library authority is not fulfilling its duties under the Act.⁶

Interventions by the Secretary of State will be considered on a case-by-case basis and an inquiry will only be started with “very good reason”. In deciding whether to order an inquiry, the following areas may be taken into account:

- the analysis of existing and projected local need for the public library service - this may include things like deprivation indices, rural/urban context, and consideration of vulnerable groups such as the unemployed, elderly, disabled, children and young people, and young families
- any consultation process undertaken in the lead up to proposed library changes and the authority’s response to that consultation
- the strategic plan for the library service, including innovative and creative ways of providing the service
- any equality impact assessment and how any adverse impacts may be countered⁷

In 2009, the then Secretary of State ordered an inquiry into the library services provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council. There hasn’t been an inquiry anywhere since then, despite concerns about the impact of funding cuts on libraries.

The DCMS published [guidance](#) on libraries as a statutory service in December 2015.⁸ This includes, as an example, details of the Secretary of State’s decision not to intervene over library provision in Sheffield.

⁴ *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* s1

⁵ DCMS, [Report under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 for 2015](#), December 2015

⁶ *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964* s10(1)(a)

⁷ DCMS, [2010 to 2015 government policy: library services](#), May 2015

⁸ DCMS, [Guidance on libraries as a statutory service](#), December 2015

The Inquiry into Wirral library service, 2009

In April 2009, the then Culture Secretary, Andy Burnham, ordered an inquiry into Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's compliance with its duties under section 7 of the 1964 Act.⁹

The Council's plans to close 11 of Wirral's 24 public libraries had been the subject of a large volume of correspondence, mainly from the public, but also from professional bodies. The Council was asked to work with the then Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)¹⁰ on the proposed restructuring of its library services. The MLA subsequently wrote to the Secretary of State, expressing concern about the situation in the Wirral.¹¹

The inquiry, led by Sue Charteris, was significant as it examined the factors determining whether a local authority was in breach of its statutory duties.

What did the report say?

The inquiry's [report](#) was published in September 2009 and found that Wirral Council's decision to restructure its library service was in breach of its statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" service.¹²

The Council had "failed to make an assessment of local needs (or alternatively to evidence knowledge of verifiable local needs) in respect of its library services."¹³ It had taken the decision to close 11 libraries "in the absence of a strategic plan or review of the Library Service" and "without a clear understanding of the extent and range of services [then] being provided in the libraries".

There had been "a further breach in relation to the needs of deprived communities" and a key concern was that there had been "an absence of an adequate plan for and commitment to a comprehensive outreach service." Without an assessment of needs and a strategic Library Service review, the Council had "displayed a lack of logic around why some facilities were recommended for closure and not others."¹⁴

The report concluded that there was a strong case for reviewing the decision and/or retaining at least some physical service at some sites earmarked for closure.¹⁵ A number of recommendations were made to the Secretary of State, including that Wirral Council produce a strategic

⁹ "[Culture secretary Andy Burnham orders local inquiry into public library service](#)", DCMS press release, 3 April 2009

¹⁰ From 1 October 2011, the MLA's functions transferred to Arts Council England and the National Archives: "Museums and libraries formally transfer to Arts Council England", ACE news release, 3 October 2011

¹¹ DCMS press release, "[Culture secretary Andy Burnham orders local inquiry into public library service](#)", 3 April 2009

¹² DCMS, [A local inquiry into the public library service provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council: led by Sue Charteris](#), 2009, p6

¹³ Ibid, p6

¹⁴ Ibid, pp7-8

¹⁵ Ibid, p8

development plan for its library service within six months of the report's publication.¹⁶

Outcome

In November 2009, the Culture Minister issued a statement explaining that, since Wirral Council had subsequently revoked its decision to close 11 libraries, it was no longer appropriate to rule on whether the earlier decision was in breach of the 1964 Act.¹⁷

Report welcomed

CILIP welcomed the Inquiry's conclusions as "arguably, a clear updating of the 1964 Act".¹⁸

Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, has since described the report as "an immensely important influence on library provision in that authority, but also on how we speak about the statutory duty at national level."¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid, p9

¹⁷ Archived DCMS website, [Wirral library service inquiry](#) [snapshot taken 7/4/10] [accessed 14 April 2016]

¹⁸ "Wirral report says user needs and staff input are central to legal duty", *Update*, January-February 2010, p6

¹⁹ "Custodian of public libraries?", *Update*, January 2011, pp12-14; In June 2015, Ed Vaizey said that the Inquiry's report "was a good guide for local authorities who are undertaking reviews" [[HC Deb 9 June 2015 c61WH](#)]

3. The role of Arts Council England

[Arts Council England](#) (ACE) is the development agency for libraries in England and has responsibility for supporting and developing libraries.²⁰

In 2012/13, ACE carried out a research project to understand the future for libraries and how to help them develop.²¹

The research found that “public libraries are trusted spaces, open to all, in which people continue to explore and share the joys of reading, information, knowledge and culture”:

It is clear that people value the services that libraries provide and will continue to do so. Indeed, there is a clear message that there is a compelling and continuing need for a publicly funded library service. The research also reminds us that public libraries face many challenges in the coming years, including: advances in technology, which affect the ways in which people want to connect to information and culture; reduced public expenditure; the increasing involvement of citizens in the design and delivery of public services; and the needs of an ageing population.²²

Four priority areas for development were identified:

- placing the library as the hub of the community
- making the most of digital technology and creative media
- ensuring that libraries are resilient and sustainable
- delivering the right skills for those who work in libraries²³

ACE’s work in these areas includes a [Libraries Development Initiative](#), research on [community libraries](#), and a [“Grants for the arts Libraries fund”](#). The latter invests National Lottery money in projects delivered by public libraries working in partnership with artists and cultural organisations.

²⁰ Arts Council England website, [Supporting libraries](#) [accessed 14 April 2016]

²¹ Arts Council England website, [Envisioning the library of the future](#) [accessed 14 April 2016]

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid

4. Independent Library Report for England (December 2014)

In February 2014, the DCMS and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) commissioned William Sieghart to produce a report on public libraries looking at:

- the core principles of a public library into the future
- whether the current model of delivery is the most comprehensive and efficient
- the role of community libraries²⁴

The [Independent Library Report for England](#) was published in December 2014. This noted the continuing importance of libraries and called for their re-invigoration:

(...) Despite the growth in digital technologies, there is still a clear need and demand within communities for modern, safe, non-judgemental, flexible spaces, where citizens of all ages can mine the knowledge of the world for free, supported by the help and knowledge of the library workforce. This is particularly true for the most vulnerable in society who need support and guidance and to children and young people who benefit from engagement with libraries outside of the formal classroom environment.

The library does more than simply loan books. It underpins every community. It is not just a place for self-improvement, but the supplier of an infrastructure for life and learning, from babies to old age, offering support, help, education, and encouraging a love of reading...²⁵

The report said that libraries should play a major role in rectifying literacy standards as well as helping to create digital literacy and fluency.²⁶

Recommendations

Three major recommendations were made:

1. The provision of a national digital resource for libraries, to be delivered in partnership with local authorities
2. The setting up of a task and finish force, led by local government, in partnership with other bodies involved in the library sector, to provide a strategic framework for England, and to help in implementing the following
3. The task force, to work with local authorities, to help them improve, revitalise and if necessary, change their local library service, while encouraging, appropriate to each library, increased community involvement.²⁷

²⁴ ["William Sieghart to chair panel to produce independent report on England's public library service"](#), DCMS/DCLG press release, 8 February 2014

²⁵ DCMS, [Independent Library Report for England](#), December 2014, p5

²⁶ Ibid, p6

²⁷ Ibid, p5

Actions

The report then set out a number of actions for central government, the task-force, and for local government.

For central government:

- To make available funding to enable local authorities to extend WiFi access, computer facilities and workforce training for all public libraries in England
- With local government, jointly establish a library taskforce, led by councils, in partnership with others interested in the sector: to provide leadership; to implement the recommendations and to help reinvigorate the public library service in England
- To have greater cross-government recognition and support for libraries
- To seek to secure changes in European and UK copyright law to enable the Public Lending Right to include remote e-loans in its next legislative term

For the taskforce:

- To support the creation of a national digital library network
- To respond to the outcomes of the current e-lending pilots and continue to work with publishers, libraries and others to secure the adoption of the models supported by the pilots
- To encourage and develop the library workforce and especially new recruits and graduates
- To develop sector-led best practice guidelines to help local authorities when working with volunteers and community-led libraries

For local government:

- With central government, jointly establish a library taskforce, led by councils, in partnership with others interested in the sector: to provide leadership; to implement the recommendations and to help reinvigorate the public library service in England
- Through the taskforce, to develop a vigorous culture of mutual support among local authorities through the sharing of good practice/resources and to seize the opportunities for even greater collaboration
- Through the taskforce, to consider all available options for the delivery of their library service
- Through the taskforce, to encourage more community involvement in the management of libraries through a variety of models²⁸

²⁸ Ibid, pp9-10

5. Leadership for Libraries Taskforce

As recommended by the Independent Library Report, a [Leadership for Libraries Taskforce](#) has been set up to take forward the Report's recommendations. The Taskforce reports to the DCMS and the Local Government Association.

Progress report (November 2015)

A six month [progress report](#) was published in November 2015.

On WiFi and digital enablement the report said:

£7.4m of funding has been made available (Budget 2015) to enable universal WiFi coverage in public libraries in England. This will support online access for those people who are currently digitally excluded and increase opportunities for libraries to deliver a wider range of services. Arts Council England (ACE) are administering the funding scheme that was officially [launched](#) on 27 July 2015. Installation is due to complete by March 2016.

This scheme complements a two year pilot by BT and Barclays that has provided WiFi to 100 libraries and community centres and digital support, coaching and guidance from BT Digital Friends and Barclays Digital Eagles volunteers. It will help participants to become more digitally confident and gain new skills.

On 27 July 2015, the Taskforce in partnership with the Tinder Foundation [announced funding](#) of £100,000 to pilot new approaches to building digital skills in socially excluded, hard to reach groups. This action research pilot on digital inclusion will run between 1 October 2015 and 31 March 2016 and is targeted at libraries that already have WiFi installed.²⁹

Other progress included the securing of £400,000 from the British Library, ACE and DCLG for [Enterprising Libraries](#). This initiative has helped six city libraries establish hubs in their buildings for small businesses and entrepreneurs.³⁰

“Shaping the future” toolkit published (December 2015)

A [Toolkit](#) was published by the Taskforce in December 2015 and updated in January 2016. This sets out how library services can support the delivery of local and national government priorities in areas such as:

- health and wellbeing / social care
- economic growth
- community cohesion
- digital literacy
- literacy and learning
- access to cultural activity

²⁹ DCMS, [Leadership for Libraries Taskforce: six month progress report \(April - September 2015\)](#), November 2015, section 2.1

³⁰ Ibid

The Toolkit describes a range of approaches to delivering cost-effective library services. It also gives suggestions on how libraries can generate additional income.³¹

Draft “Ambition document” published (March 2016)

At the request of the DCMS, the Taskforce published a draft [“ambition document”](#) on 23 March 2016.³² The purpose of the document is to “provide a focus for collaborative action, and a clear articulation of the government’s and Taskforce’s vision and support for public libraries in England.”³³

The Taskforce is seeking views on the following themes:

- context
- vision
- what libraries can achieve
- how we can make this happen
- governance and delivery
- new ways of working
- marketing and communications
- action plan

The deadline for comments on the document is 3 June 2016.

³¹ DCMS, [Libraries shaping the future: good practice toolkit](#), January 2016, section 4.5

³² DCMS, [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021](#), March 2016

³³ [Gov.UK page on the Libraries Deliver consultation](#) [accessed 15 April 2016]

6. Concerns about library services and closures

Public library closures

When the Coalition Government came to power in May 2010, there was concern that reductions in central government grants to local authorities would result in reduced library services and closures. In its January 2013 [response](#) to a [report](#)³⁴ by the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, the then Government said:

A 'comprehensive and efficient' library service represents the balance to be struck by each local authority in meeting local needs within the context of available resources in a way which is appropriate to the identified needs of the communities they serve.

The 1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act does not seek to be overly prescriptive but instead anchors the delivery of a local service to the needs of the local community. The closure of one or even a number of library branches does not necessarily signify a breach of the 1964 Act.

(...)

The Government will maintain national oversight and retain the statutory duty on local authorities to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service...The Secretary of State will use the powers of intervention where it is assessed that an authority is in breach of this responsibility. This is a serious matter, and certainly not one based on willingness and unwillingness; rather, it is a judgement on the individual facts of the case...³⁵

In June 2015, Ed Vaizey said:

(...) every single proposal by a library authority to change its library service is looked at by Ministers, and we get independent advice on whether it is appropriate to call a proposal in. Up until this point I have not done so, because a lot of library authorities have undertaken careful reviews, but it is important to put on the record—I have always said this—that I have never taken the position that I will never call in any proposal. I will always look closely at any and every proposal for significant change to a library service.³⁶

How many libraries have closed?

What the Government has said

The DCMS has said that it "does not commission specific information relating to the closure of public libraries." However it does "monitor closely" proposed changes to services.³⁷

In a parliamentary response of 23 February 2016, the DCMS estimated, on the basis of desk research, that approximately 110 static public

³⁴ Culture, Media and Sport Committee, [Library closures](#), HC 587 2012/13, November 2012

³⁵ [CM 8535](#), January 2013, pp5-6

³⁶ [HC Deb 9 June 2015 c63WH](#)

³⁷ [PQ 27175](#) [on public library closures in England], answered 23 February 2016; [PQ 217670](#) [on public library closures], answered 15 December 2015

libraries in England had closed between January 2010 and January 2016. At least 77 new public libraries had opened during the same period.³⁸

What CILIP has said

The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP) has challenged the net reduction of 33 libraries implied by the DCMS response. CILIP points to figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)³⁹ of a net reduction of 178 libraries in England between 2009-10 and 2014-15:

The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals has written an open letter to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport John Whittindgale to express a “strong objection” to the use of flawed figures for closures and new openings of public libraries by DCMS Minister, Ed Vaizey MP, in the House of Commons.

(...) Ed Vaizey is quoted in Hansard responding to the question, “Based on desk research undertaken by the Department, we estimate that from January 2010 to January 2016 approximately 110 static public libraries in England closed and at least 77 new public libraries have opened, including relocations to new buildings.”

However, figures from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) indicate that there were 3,043 libraries in England in 2009-10 and 2,865 in 2014-15, a net reduction of 178. This compares to a net reduction of 33 claimed by Ed Vaizey. CIPFA carry out an annual survey of Local Authorities in Great Britain with questions about the number of library service points, opening hours, staffing, expenditure and usage...⁴⁰

CIPFA define a library as one which is open for at least 10 hours per week.

³⁸ [PQ 27175](#) [on public library closures in England], answered 23 February 2016; see also [PQ 904216](#) [on library closures], answered 21 March 2016

³⁹ CIPFA’s annual library survey gives detailed statistics on various aspects of library provision. For information on the latest survey see: [“Library funding cut by £50m”](#), CIPFA news release, 9 December 2015

⁴⁰ [“Use of flawed figures by Ed Vaizey MP about the number of libraries strongly criticised by Chartered Institute”](#), CILIP news release, 1 March 2016

The delivery of public library services

The use of community groups and volunteers to help deliver library services has increased in recent years.⁴¹

Volunteers

A useful summary of the role of volunteers was given during an October 2013 House of Lords [debate](#). DCMS spokesperson, Lord Gardiner of Kimble, said:

(...) The involvement of volunteers in library services is not new, but their role and numbers have changed over time as library services have responded to many drivers of change.

Those drivers include - I do not hide the fact - financial challenges, which no one can ignore, as well as the Government's localism agenda, which has prompted local authorities to look afresh at the public library service they provide and at what role communities might be able to play. In recent years, library service reviews have been undertaken by many local authorities, which have resulted in a reshaping of library services with significantly more community involvement and a subsequent increase in the number of volunteers....

The role of volunteers may vary in each local authority. In some community libraries, volunteers provide support to local authority professional staff. In others, the community library is completely run by volunteers or may be fully funded by the council but delivered by a not-for-private-profit community or social enterprise or mutual organisation. Roles traditionally undertaken by volunteers that may add value to library services are numerous... There are the "Read to Me" volunteers, who provide reading services, often to the infirm, visually impaired and physically disabled. There are children and young persons volunteers... Those young people assist library staff and promote reading to younger children. Then there are volunteers who organise extra activities for all age groups and assist new and unconfident internet users with online resources... Finally, there are home book volunteers delivering books to housebound readers.⁴²

CILIP has acknowledged the support that volunteers can provide but has also said that they should not be used as a substitute for professional librarians:

CILIP believes that society benefits from the contribution that trained and skilled library, information and knowledge workers make to developing and delivering services. We do not believe that volunteers should undertake core service delivery or be asked to replace the specialised roles of staff who work in libraries.

Volunteers have long supported and provided highly valuable additional support, working alongside qualified and paid staff, and they should be acknowledged and valued for this role. They

⁴¹ For some examples and discussion see: Locality/ACE, [Community libraries: Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities](#), January 2013; ACE/DEFRA [Rural library services in England: exploring recent changes and possible futures](#), May 2014; ["The volunteers who are keeping local libraries alive"](#), BBC, 10 July 2015; ["Libraries run by volunteers as councils look to save money"](#), *Guardian*, 25 March 2013; [The libraries that have been taken over by volunteers](#), *Third Sector*, 21 August 2012; [Little Chalfont Community Library website](#) [accessed 14 April 2016]

⁴² [HL Deb 29 October 2013 Column GC574-5](#)

should also be given appropriate role descriptions, training and management.

CILIP is opposed to job substitution where paid professional and support roles are directly replaced with either volunteers or untrained administrative posts to save money. This applies to all library and information services in every sector.

If this happens services will suffer and will be unsustainable. What remains would be a library service unable to serve the community comprehensively, support people's information needs or provide everyone with the opportunity for learning and development.⁴³

Community libraries

In the same October 2013 debate, Lord Gardiner of Kimble referred to the growth in community supported or managed libraries:

(...) More recently, there has been a notable growth in public libraries that are either community-managed or community-supported. A community-managed library is largely delivered by the community. It rarely has paid staff but often has some form of ongoing local authority support and can be part of the public library network. A community-supported library is led and funded by the local authority, and its paid professional staff are supported by volunteers. There is a place for both in our communities, although the Government continue to believe very strongly in the importance of professional librarians.

Some library authorities have embedded community libraries as a core part of their service. Indeed, in Buckinghamshire, the 14 community-managed libraries are a significant part of the statutory network of 34 public libraries across the county...

Research undertaken by Arts Council England in July 2012 indicated that the number of operating community libraries was 178, with the number rising to more than 250 by the end of the year...⁴⁴

In March 2016, the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce published a good practice [toolkit](#) on community libraries.⁴⁵ This is for:

- heads of library services who want to increase the involvement of community volunteers in delivering their library service
- communities who are looking to establish community libraries
- heads of library services who are supporting communities considering taking over or establishing a community managed library; or supporting a community managed library that is council led

The Arts Council England website includes a [briefing paper](#) on community libraries.⁴⁶

⁴³ CILIP website, [Policy statement on the use of volunteers](#) (dated June 2012) [accessed 14 April 2016]

⁴⁴ [HL Deb 29 October 2013 Column GC575](#)

⁴⁵ DCMS, [Community libraries: good practice toolkit](#), March 2016 (updated 1 April 2016)

⁴⁶ Locality, [Community libraries - learning from experience: summary briefing for local authorities](#), ACE/LGA, January 2013

CILIP's "My Library By Right" campaign

A ["My Library By Right"](#) was launched by the CILIP in December 2015:

The Government and Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to provide you with a quality library service that meets your needs.

By statute Local Authorities must provide 'comprehensive and efficient' library services and Government must oversee and improve libraries.

These rights are not widely understood and are being neglected in the face of economic pressures. This is putting important principles at risk, including the ability to access a quality library service wherever you live and at times to suit you.

Public libraries in England provide a lifeline for millions of people every day. They help people get online, develop their literacy and skills, find employment and build stronger ties across their community. We must stand up and defend our statutory right to a quality library service.

The campaign wants:

- The public's rights to libraries to be recognised and respected
- Public libraries to be treated as the statutory services they are
- The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to carry out their legal duties under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act
- Statutory guidance for local authorities on their duties under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act from DCMS, with support from CILIP and the library and information profession⁴⁷

CILIP briefings relating to the campaign are available from its [website](#).

A range of more [general material](#) on public libraries has also been published by CILIP.

⁴⁷ ["Government failures put libraries at risk warns new campaign"](#), CILIP news, 16 December 2015

Appendix: public library statistics

The following statistics are compiled from CIPFA public library statistics reports from 2005 to 2015. The end of this section contains the main data from which all graphs and figures are derived from.⁴⁸

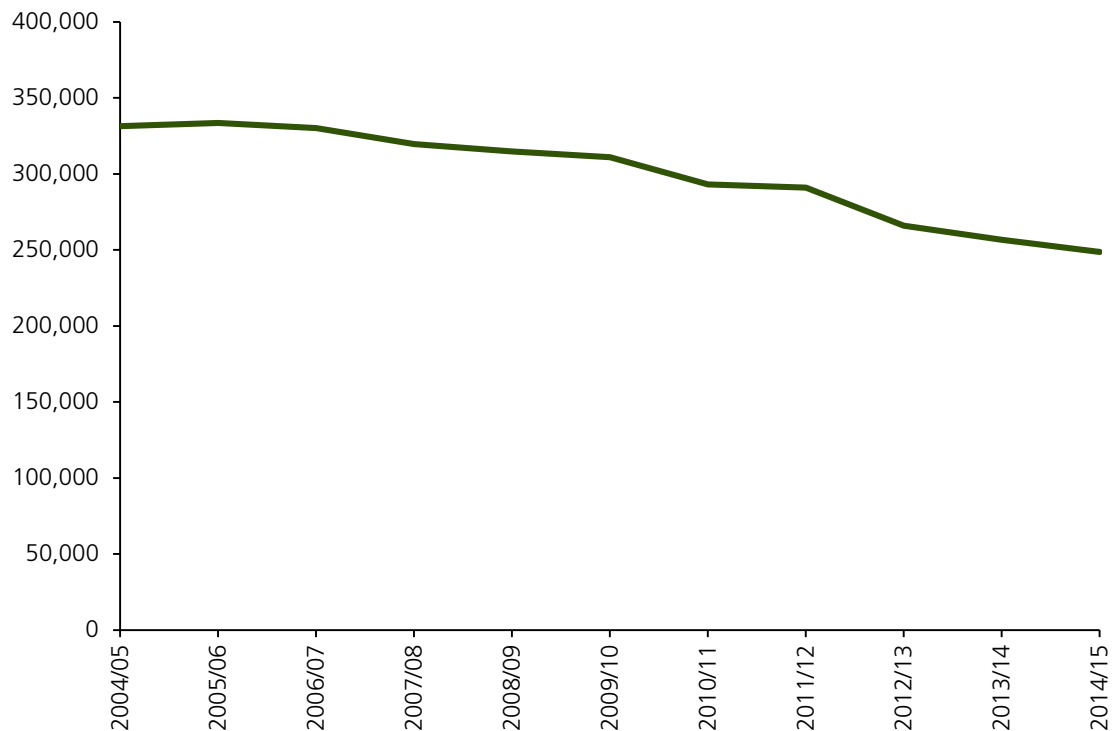
Visitor numbers

In the year 2004/05 there were 331,458,000 visits to public libraries across England, Wales and Scotland. By the end of 2014/15 this figure was 248,661,000 – this represents a reduction of 82,797,000 visits (25%) on 2004/05.

From 2006/07 onwards there was a year on year decrease in visitor numbers. The sole year in which there was an increase was 2005/06.

Between 2004/05 and 2009/10 visitor numbers had decreased by 6%. During the period 2009/10-2014/15 visitor numbers reduced by 20%. The largest single decrease occurred in 2012/13 with an 8.6% reduction on the year before. The graph below shows the number of visits to public libraries.

Number of library visits, 000s



Book stock and book loans

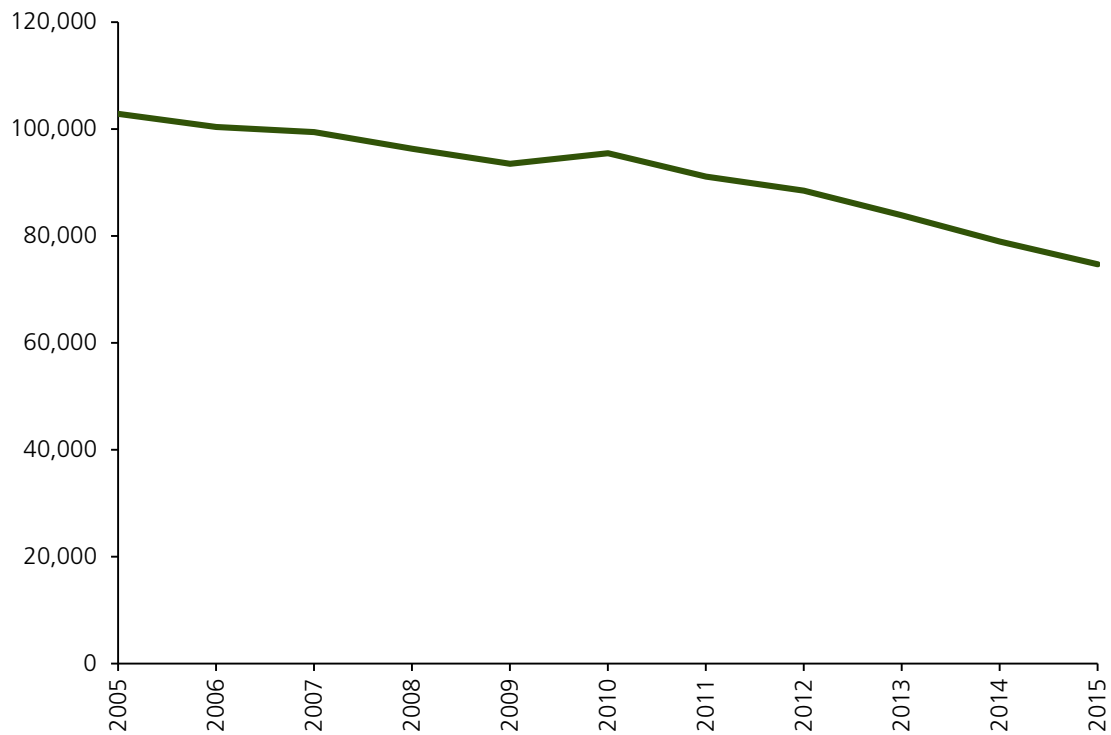
As with visitor numbers the number of books in stock within public libraries has been reduced over the last decade. As at 31 March 2005 there were approximately 102,887,000 books in stock across public libraries. By 31 March 2015 the number of books in stock stood at 74,751,000 – a reduction of 28,136,000 (27%) on the 2005 figure.

⁴⁸ Figures and charts in the appendix prepared by Noel Dempsey

2009/10 was the only year in which the stock of books for public libraries increased – 95,530,000 as at 31 March 2010.

Between 2004/05 and 2009/10 public library book stocks had decreased by 7%. During the period 2009/10-2014/15 public library book stocks reduced by just under 22%. The largest single decrease occurred in 2013/14 when the book stock at 31 March 2014 was just under 6% lower than the year before. The graph below shows the number of books in stock in public libraries.

Number of library books in stock as at 31 March, 000s



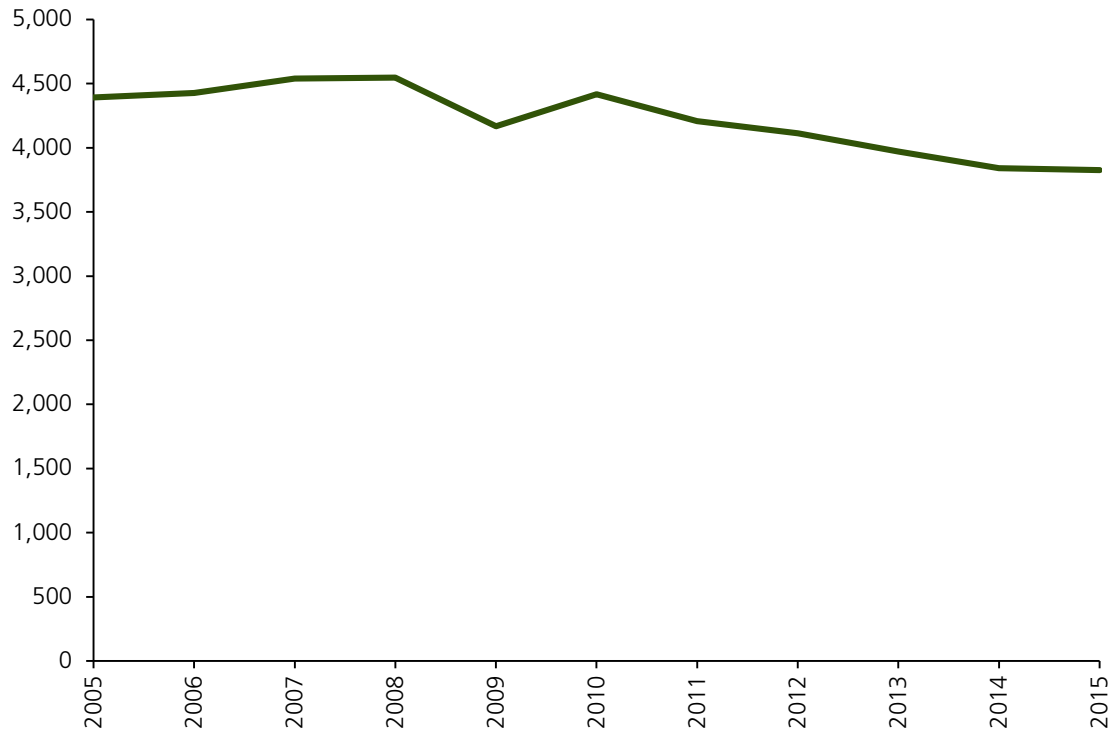
As to be expected with the reduction in visitor numbers to public libraries, across the last decade total book borrowing also decreased, although at a greater rate. Between 2004/05 and 2014/15 the total number of books issued for loan fell from 322,172,000 to 209,354,000 – a reduction of 112,817,000 (35%).

Library “service points” and internet access

The number of public libraries is measured in “service points” to include mobile as well as static libraries. The graph below shows the total number of library service points.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Service points open 10 or more hours per week and those open less than 10 hours per week. Static and mobile.

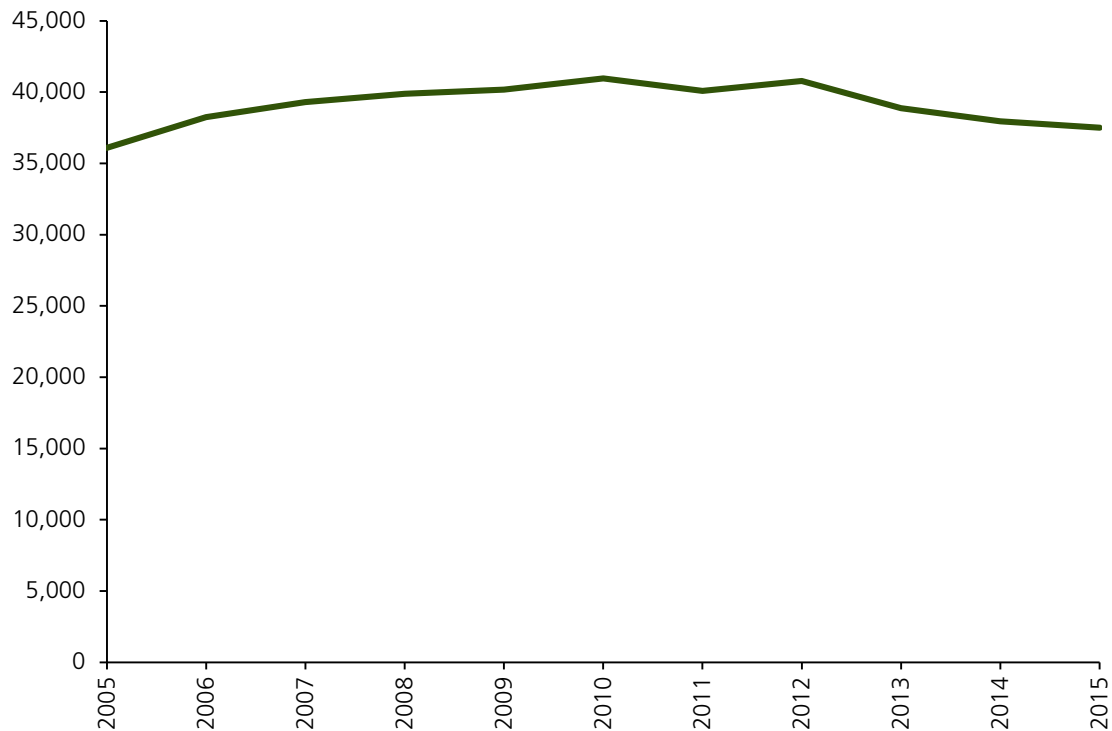
Number of library "service points"



As at 31 March 2005 there were a total of 4,392 service points across England, Wales and Scotland. At the same date in 2015 this figure stood at 3,827 – a reduction of 565 (12.8%). Between 31 March 2005 and 2010 the number of service points decreased by 26 (0.6%). During the period 2010-2015 the number of service points fell by 591 (13.4%). The number of libraries which were open 10 hours or less per week accounted for a small proportion of total service points throughout the period – around 3%.

Aside being a service purely dedicated to the storing and loaning of books for the public, libraries also offer computer terminals, often with access to the internet. The graph below illustrates the number of computer terminals with access to library catalogues and the internet.

Number of library computer terminals with catalogue and internet access, as at 31 March



At 31 March 2005 there were a total of 36,094 terminals with library catalogue and internet access. This figure increased year on year until 2011 when the number of terminals was reduced to 40,088 (2.1% lower than the previous year). By 31 March 2012 there was a recovery nearer to pre 2011 numbers, however, since then terminal numbers have declined each subsequent year. At 31 March 2015 there were 37,516 computer terminals with catalogue and internet access – 8.4% lower than in 2010 although an increase of 3.9% on 2005.

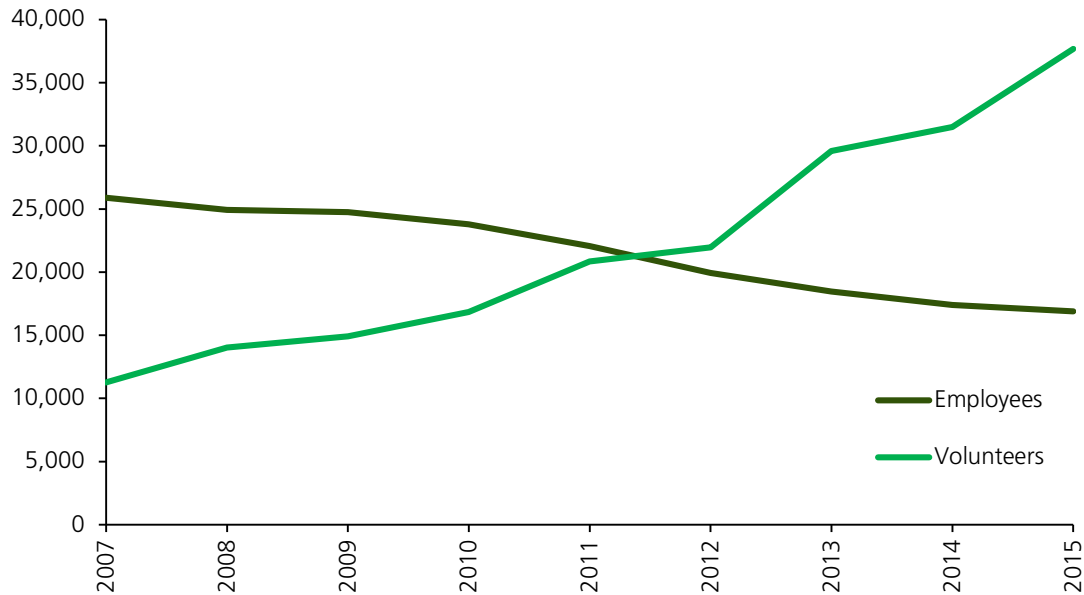
The number of terminals with access to Wi-Fi as at 31 March 2011 stood at 823. By 31 March 2015 this figure was 2,413 – a 193% increase on 2011. The average annual increase was 38.6%.

Employees and volunteers

As at 31 March 2005 there were 25,677 full time equivalent (FTE) employees working in public libraries across England, Wales and Scotland. At the same data in 2015 this figure was 16,902 representing a reduction of 34.1%. Since 2007 the number of people employed by public libraries decreased year on year. Between 2010 and 2015 the number of employees decreased by 6,892 (28.9%).

While employee numbers were decreasing over period, the number of volunteers working in libraries increased. At 31 March 2007 there were 11,279 volunteers. By 2015 this figure had increased to 37,692 – a 234% increase. By 2012 volunteers outnumbered library employees. The graph below illustrates these trends.

Number of library employees and volunteers as at 31 March, FTE



BBC figures

The BBC has recently published library figures acquired by Freedom of Information requests to local authorities across the UK.⁵⁰

According to the BBC⁵¹ there were 31,977 paid staff in 2010 and that this had reduced to 24,044 in March 2016 (the date the BBC published its data). The reduction represents a fall of 24.8%.

The number of volunteers working in libraries in 2010 was 15,984. This figure had increase by March 2016 to 31,529 – a 97% increase.

BBC figures also suggest that since 2010 343 libraries have closed. Of this, 207 (60.3%) were static closures, 132 (38.5%) mobile closures and 4 (1.2%) other closures. From 2010 174 libraries were transferred to community ran projects with a further 58 transferred to other providers.

⁵⁰ [BBC, Libraries lose a quarter of staff as hundreds close”, 29 March 2016](#). The data collected by the BBC can be accessed [here](#).

⁵¹ The BBC data for the number of employees are based on headcounts rather than FTE. Additionally it is not clear from the FOI question whether the numbers collected by the BBC are based on a headcount at a specific date or whether it is the total amount of people who have been employed by libraries across a the year. The BBC FOI questions for employee numbers were “How many members of staff worked for your libraries service in 2010 (headcount please, not FTE)?” and “How many members of staff work for your libraries service (headcount please, not FTE) today?”. Headcounts and FTE are not comparable. Only data present for both years are included.

England, Wales and Scotland Local Authority Library Statistics

Year	Service points open 10 hours and more per week	Service points open 10 hours or less per week	Total service points (10+ and <10 hours per week)	Number of terminals with library catalogue and internet access	Number of terminals with access to Wi-Fi	Employees: Professional posts	Employees: All other posts	Employees: Total posts	Number of volunteers
2005	4,230	162	4,392	36,094	-	5,811	19,866	25,677	-
2006	4,301	127	4,428	38,242	-	5,477	20,140	25,617	-
2007	4,390	149	4,539	39,294	-	5,429	20,453	25,882	11,279
2008	4,391	157	4,548	39,893	-	5,031	19,887	24,918	14,022
2009	4,038	130	4,168	40,169	-	4,733	20,037	24,764	14,906
2010	4,292	126	4,418	40,955	-	4,585	19,209	23,794	16,840
2011	4,093	116	4,209	40,088	823	3,993	18,061	22,053	20,840
2012	3,998	114	4,112	40,776	1,139	3,212	17,261	19,924	21,973
2013	3,854	117	3,971	38,876	1,443	3,287	15,177	18,456	29,598
2014	3,714	128	3,842	37,961	1,949	3,008	14,406	17,414	31,485
2015	3,693	134	3,827	37,516	2,413	2,460	14,442	16,902	37,692

Year	Total book stock 000s	Total book lending stock 000s	Total book issues 000s*	Number of library visits for library purposes 000s*	Net expenditure excl. capital charges (Cash) £000s*	Net expenditure excl. capital charges (real) £000s*
2005	102,887	76,155	322,172	331,458	£914,743	£1,156,395
2006	100,422	74,249	315,175	333,562	£994,120	£1,221,023
2007	99,484	73,353	308,798	330,142	£1,030,475	£1,229,346
2008	96,364	72,232	300,560	319,668	£1,025,098	£1,189,030
2009	93,547	70,803	302,812	314,902	£1,014,029	£1,145,834
2010	95,530	71,935	300,156	311,037	£1,029,874	£1,136,864
2011	91,140	69,214	280,520	293,195	£946,648	£1,014,531
2012	88,467	68,852	275,206	291,031	£911,280	£961,703
2013	83,914	65,425	244,820	266,007	£841,736	£872,320
2014	78,952	62,651	227,782	256,702	£768,811	£780,439
2015	74,751	60,171	209,354	248,661	£736,076	£736,076

Note:

* indicates year to 31 March

Data based on 203 local authorities up until 2009; 205 local authorities thereafter

Source:

CIPA, [Public Library Statistics](#), (various years), accessed on 13 April 2016

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