



Comhairle Chontae Liatroma
Leitrim County Council

Your Library A Space to Connect

Leitrim Library Development Plan
2023-2027

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FOREWORD

This new Library Development Plan 2023-2027 sets out the direction in which Leitrim County Council's Library Service intends to go. It sets out tangible objectives which were developed by public consultation, library staff input, as well as public representative opinion. This plan endeavors to highlight how libraries will continue to engage, inspire, and empower individuals and communities across the county and how it will enable inclusion, participation and creative expression that will improve the quality of life for all of our communities.

In the past two years, public libraries and local authorities have risen to the challenges presented by global issues, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact of the war in Ukraine. Our libraries continue to provide a wide range of services that are free and accessible but also as important, trusted cultural and democratic spaces offering open, inclusive opportunities for learning and collaboration.

Our library service aspires to become a benchmark for what public libraries can be in terms of engagement, relevance, innovation, and impact. The success of the plan will depend on the active participation of our communities, our members, our staff, management, and elected members.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in the research and consultation phase. This plan will deliver the continued growth of Leitrim's Library Service over the next five years and build the service capacity to respond to the needs of the community into the future.

Cllr. Justin Warnock
Cathaoirleach
Leitrim County Council



Joseph Gilhooly
Chief Executive
Leitrim County Council



A NOTE FROM THE COUNTY LIBRARIAN

Library spaces are multi-purpose community facilities that contribute to place-making and community connection. They are vibrant, accessible and open places for meeting, learning and inspiration. These spaces and the digital infrastructure that sustains and animates them are as fundamental to our service as our collections and our staff. We aim to be agile in response to an ever-changing environment and ensure robust infrastructure and networks to support the growing digital library as well as improving and expanding the physical network. How the library service behaves and engages with our communities is critical to staying relevant and delivering a service that catches the attention of members and nonmembers alike.

I want to especially thank Leitrim Library staff, not only for the enthusiasm with which they contributed to this plan, but for the commitment and creativity they bring to their work. It's because of them that we are so well placed to deliver for our communities.

I wish to acknowledge the work of Meehan Tully Consultants and to express my thanks to Michael, Mark and Maeve for their advice and practical help in progressing the plan through its various stages.

And finally, I would like to express my gratitude for the support of the Cathaoirleach and elected members of Leitrim County Council, Chief Executive and Management Team of Leitrim County Council for their continued leadership and championing of libraries in County Leitrim.

Pauline Brennan
County Librarian
Leitrim County Library Service



INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Leitrim Library Service has been providing for the reading and cultural needs of the residents of County Leitrim since 1931. While libraries have changed considerably in the intervening decades, the community and reading remain central to our mission to enrich the lives of all the people of County Leitrim by providing universal access to our services, spaces, and programmes, face-to-face and online.



In response to key challenges facing libraries nationally, and County Leitrim specifically, this development plan sets forth Leitrim Library Service's vision, values, and objectives for the period 2023-2027. The plan includes ambitions that will provide for a more inclusive, responsive, flexible, and sustainable library service centred at the heart of the community.

METHODOLOGY

To help inform this plan, extensive consultation with service users, key stakeholders, and the wider public was carried out during the period May through August 2023. The objective of this consultative process was to gather user and non-user experiences of the service and to identify attitudes, expectations, and potential opportunities for its future development.

PUBLIC MEETINGS AND SURVEYS

The process included one-to-one interviews, open (public) and stakeholder group consultative sessions, and online (and hardcopy) public and stakeholder surveys. The survey was widely publicised throughout County Leitrim by means of social media postings, email, direct contact, and posters, and, in total, 483 responses were received of which 265 were submitted online and 218 in hardcopy.

Two facilitated public consultative sessions were held during the period June-July 2023; one a Saturday morning session in Carrick-on-Shannon, the other a weekday evening session in Manorhamilton. In addition, stakeholder focus groups sessions were conducted with key library management, library staff, and elected officials and senior Local Authority management.

Further desktop research and review of relevant strategic documents and plans was also undertaken as part of the plan development process. This, along with the results

of the consultation, informed the preparation of a draft development plan that was presented to the senior library management team in late August 2023.

LEITRIM LIBRARY SERVICE

OUR LIBRARIES

Established in 1931, Leitrim Library Service today, is at the heart of the Leitrim community, providing reading, cultural, and educational services, and programmes to all residents of the county. Delivery is through our branch libraries, local studies library, and digital offering.



With almost 7,000 active (registered) library users, 100,000 items borrowed, and more than 140,000 library visits anticipated in 2023 alone, Leitrim Library is one of the county's most important providers of essential public services. Membership is free and open to all ages. In addition to books and reading, members and non-members can access a wide range of services and events across cultural, education, social, health, community, and artistic spheres.

Leitrim's registered library users can access facilities, services, and programmes available at any of Ireland's more than 330 public libraries to include the more than 13,000,000 items held by public library services nationwide via the new national Library Management System (LMS) introduced in 2022.

BRANCHES, BUILDINGS AND STAFF

The Library Service, from its headquarters in Ballinamore, manages and operates eight branch libraries throughout the county, five full-time and three part-time, each of which delivers a wide range of services and programmes, including Open Library services.

Currently, in addition to the County Library headquarters and Local Studies library in Ballinamore (1,465 registered users), there are seven branch libraries located in the following towns (number of registered branch users shown in brackets):

- Carrick-on-Shannon (1,883)
- Carrigallen (225)
- Manorhamilton (1,137)
- Dromahair (205)
- Mohill (1,018)
- Kiltyclogher (103)
- Drumshanbo (736)

The Library Service is supported by 12 full-time and 9 part-time members of staff distributed across the branches.

Drumshanbo and the new Dromahair branch libraries will function as 'Open Libraries' where public access on a self-service, non-staffed basis, is available from 8am to 10pm, 365 days a year.

BRANCH SIZE AND POPULATION

The eight branches of the Leitrim County Library serve a total of 35,199 people (Census 2022.) The table below illustrates the type and size of each of the branches within County Leitrim relative to the total population within the immediate surrounding catchment area of each branch. In this case, the population is calculated using the Census 2022 statistics for each Electoral Division (ED) in which the branches are located, as well as the surrounding EDs.¹

In relation the minimum requirement of 500m² for libraries serving populations of 3,000, as identified in the Public Library National Standards and Benchmarks for libraries, it appears that 6 out of 8 branches do not meet the minimum requirement.

LOCATION	TYPE	MEMBERS	SIZE SQ MTR	POP.	MIN SIZE?
MOHILL	Branch	1,018	201	3,063	NO
BALLINAMORE	Headquarters	1,465	232	3,449	NO
CARRIGALLEN	Branch	225	54	2,079	YES
DROMAHAIR	Branch	205	62	3,094	NO
DRUMSHANBO	Branch	736	240	3,338	NO
KILTYCLOGHER	Branch	103	76	784	YES
MANORHAMILTON	Branch	1,137	156	3,073	NO
CARRICK-ON-SHANNON	Branch	1,883	169	5,539	NO

¹ To reflect the traditional catchment areas for each Electoral Division, a number of adjustments have been made for Dromahair and Manorhamilton. This includes the division of Cloonogher ED between the Dromahair and Manorhamilton branches, while Kiltyclogher and Ballahameehan EDs are excluded from the Manorhamilton branch.

SERVICES

In regions such as County Leitrim, where almost 90% of the population live in rural areas, libraries fulfil an important and essential role in the life of the community and its residents. In Leitrim, our eight library facilities address this role by delivering a wide range of freely available services and programmes, to include the following:



- Broadband, public PCs, and Wi-Fi access
- Printing services
- Library collections for adults and children
- Events and activities
- Access to books in all Republic of Ireland libraries
- Book clubs and book club supports
- Wide range of children's reading material and activities
- Sensory Services – sensory room in Mohill Library, Cubbie (sensory pod) in Manorhamilton, and a 'Magic Table' in both Mohill and Carrick-on-Shannon
- Digital Skills sessions
- Reading Pens
- Fact Factory
- Home Energy Kits
- Sensory services
- Study facilities
- Local Studies (Ballinamore library, by appointment)
- On-line services
 - E-books and E-audiobooks (through Borrowbox)
 - Universal Class - offers 400 online short learning courses
 - Language skills learning (through Transparent Language)
 - Access to over 3,000 digital magazines (through Libby)
 - Access to international newspapers and magazines (through Pressreader)
 - Digital children's books in languages other than English (through Lots4Kids)

BETWEEN THE BOOKS – WAYS PEOPLE USE OUR SPACES

No two days are the same in any of our libraries. Each serve as important focal points for their local communities providing multipurpose spaces for a diverse range of public activities where people can meet, interact, and exchange ideas. Reading may be a solo occupation for many, but our extensive calendar of programmes, workshops, and events are popular with users and always well attended. All branch libraries have regular class visits and host story-time, author visits and art/craft events.



We host Digital Skills Sessions for adults and all host events and activities under National Programmes such as Right To Read and Healthy Ireland. Each branch runs a wide range of classes and events serving both local community needs and linking to national programmes of reading, culture, health, education, citizenship, and celebration. Every year, we link to events such as National Heritage Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Engineers Week, Culture Night and World Poetry Day.

Classes

- Digital Skills Sessions
- Financial literacy
- Media literacy
- Business and employment skills
- Health awareness
- Fáilte Isteach programme
- Sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness
- Film workshops
- Health lectures and workshops

Library-based groups and clubs

- Book clubs/ Reader Groups
- Writing groups
- Knitting/Crochet Groups
- Friends of Breastfeeding Group
- Craft groups
- Bridge Club
- Scrabble Group
- Yoga Group
- Parent and Toddler Group
- Film club

Events

- Storytelling
- Historical commemoration
- Book launch
- Music Concerts

Local events linked to

- Seachtain na Gaeilge
- World Poetry Day
- World Book Day
- World Wildlife Day
- National Heritage Week
- Engineers Week
- Grow It Yourself
- Decade of Centenaries

Community

- Community/ Citizens' Information
- Community Consultations

CASE STUDIES

SENSE-ABILITY



Delivered in partnership with Roscommon and Sligo Library services, the Sense-Ability programme offers a positive library experience for people with sensory or additional educational needs. The programme supports individuals of all abilities, their families, and caregivers. Each branch has a portable sensory kit available to borrow free of charge and a dedicated sensory room where adults and children with special needs can explore and develop their senses and skills is located in Mohill branch library. Being based in a local library space, means that these facilities are more accessible to many in the community.

The Carrick-On-Shannon branch library has a portable 'Magic Table' with an interactive light projector specifically designed for people with dementia, physical impairment, learning disabilities, autism, brain injury and other care needs. A 'Cubbie', a self-contained booth with a suite of images, sounds, and lighting that can be programmed to suit the sensory profile of individual users, can be found in Manorhamilton and this used regularly by adults and children.

HEALTHY IRELAND AT YOUR LIBRARY



Leitrim Library Service is actively involved in delivering Healthy Ireland at Your Library information in all our branches. This initiative, which encourages people to 'Eat Well, Think Well, Be Well', includes the provision in each library of a dedicated section with books and information on health and well-being, access to free online health resources including e-magazines, e-books and e-audio books, and a programme of free health events and activities in all branches.

Healthy Ireland is a broad framework of actions undertaken nationally by government departments, public sector organisations, businesses, communities, and individuals to improve health and wellbeing and reduce the risks posed to future generations. The Healthy Ireland library book collection now includes almost 100 titles, including newly added books for young adults and children, all of which are checked out regularly.

RIGHT TO READ



Leitrim Libraries deliver the national Right to Read programme promoting literacy and reading development for people of all ages and backgrounds. Our younger members have embraced Right to Read initiatives such as 'Spring into Storytime', 'Summer Stars', and 'My Little Library Book' which provide friendly reading support for children up to 12 years of age. Hundreds of children take part in these county wide initiatives which include special supports for those with additional needs. In many cases, children progress from 'My Little Library' through to 'Summer Stars', encouraging a lifelong reading and library use habit, with over 900 children taking participating annually.

LOCAL STUDIES



Ballinamore Library is home to our Local Studies Department which contains an exceptional archive of print, digital, and microfiche material relating to the history, archaeology, genealogy, literature, culture, and heritage of County Leitrim. Containing an extensive collection of more than 9,000 digitally indexed primary and secondary sources including books, magazines, newspapers, maps, photographs, DVDs, CDs, and videos, it is the focal point for local history research.

We also hold a collection of books published in Leitrim about Leitrim and written or compiled by Leitrim authors. As a Local Studies Collection involves both the concept of living history and responsibilities to future historians it is always evolving.

REGULAR AND ONE-OFF EVENTS

Sample events in Leitrim Libraries

**21 CHILDREN ATTEND
SESSION WITH DOG'S TRUST
IRELAND**



**901 CHILDREN
PARTICIPATED IN THE
'SUMMER STARS' EVENTS IN
2023**

**WORLD BOOK DAY EVENT IN
MANORHAMILTON WITH 50
CHILDREN**



**JOE MOONEY
SUMMERSCHOOL WITH 45
PARTICIPANTS AT
WORKSHOPS**

**23 TEACHERS AT PRIMARY
SCHOOLS PERSONAL
DEVELOPMENT COURSE**



**WEEKLY IRISH LANGUAGE
CONVERSATION WITH 40
PEOPLE**

**BEEKEEPING FOR
BIOODIVERSITY DURING
NATIONAL HERITAGE WEEK
WITH 45 PEOPLE**



**DECADE OF CENTENARIES
LECTURE WITH 27
ATTENDEES**

**'GARDA SIOCHANA 1922
MUTINY' WITH 56
ATTENDEES**



**53 CHILDREN AND 12 ADULTS
USE THE LIBRARY CUBBIE IN
ONE MONTH**

**WOMEN IN HISTORY POP UP
MUSEUM WITH 35
ATTENDEES**



**31 CHILDREN WITH
ADDITIONAL NEEDS ATTEND
THE DEDICATED 'SUMMER
STARS' EVENT**

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Ireland's public libraries serve local communities across the island as centres for learning and knowledge, cultural activities, and information. Since the publishing of the Public Libraries (Ireland) Act of 1855, each local authority has had the responsibility for developing, delivering, and managing library services within their own areas. Under the Public Libraries Act 1947, a central library, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna, was established which had as its remit to assist and support local authorities in developing public library services. These functions were later transferred, in 2012, to Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency.



As a function of Leitrim County Council, the local authority, Leitrim Library Service is responsible for the delivery and management of library services throughout the county. In this, the service is guided by national, regional, and local plans as summarised in the following sections.

PROJECT IRELAND 2040 (NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK)

Leitrim Library Service is influenced by and contributes to the achieving of the Framework's shared goals – National Strategic Outcomes - to be achieved by 2027. Specifically, during the period of this plan, the Library Service will seek to strengthen rural communities throughout County Leitrim by ensuring the effective delivery of essential library and related services through its library network. The provision of such services will further enhance the attractiveness of Leitrim's branch library towns, and surrounding rural areas, as desirable places to live, work and visit. The offering of educational and health information services and programmes available through each library will further support the strengthening of Leitrim's rural communities.

OUR RURAL FUTURE - RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2021-2025

The policy outlines the Government's vision for enabling people to live and work in vibrant rural communities and emphasises the important role of libraries in achieving this objective. By providing inclusive, multi-purpose spaces for social interactions, shared activities, personal development, lifelong learning, as well as services and initiatives targeting marginalised and disadvantaged individuals and communities, libraries support the strengthening of rural areas.

TOWN CENTRE FIRST - A POLICY APPROACH FOR IRISH TOWNS

Central to the achieving of the vision of Our Rural Future, the Government's town centre first policies support the regeneration and development of rural towns and villages as viable, vibrant, and attractive places to live, work and visit. Cultural assets, such as libraries, provide communities with important focal points for the services and social, cultural, and educational activities which strengthen the attractiveness and viability of rural areas.

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Ireland is committed to achieving sustainable development in line with the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Ireland's Second National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024 specifically references the importance of public libraries in raising awareness of and promoting SDGs at local and community level. This is amplified in the new National Public Library Strategy which has a specific focus on sustainability and climate action and includes strategic actions relating to the achieving of Ireland's SDG objectives.

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2023

The plan places climate solutions at the centre of social and economic development and provides a roadmap for realising the Programme for Government's commitment to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. It identifies that every sector has a role to play in ensuring a rapid transition to a more sustainable carbon-free society and specifically calls for increasing the energy efficiency of existing buildings and delivering zero-emissions new builds as being essential to achieving the Government's climate targets.

PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS

Established in 2015 to ensure the uniformed, monitored, and sustained development of libraries throughout Ireland, this document provides performance measures, in the form of standards and benchmarks, to be attained by all local authorities to ensure compliance with nationally agreed levels of service delivery.

THE LIBRARY IS THE PLACE: INFORMATION, RECREATION, INSPIRATION NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGY 2023-2027

Adopted in July 2023, the new strategy envisions public libraries as being at the heart of communities in providing a wide and varied range of services, programmes, events, activities, and other supports that enrich and improve individuals and their communities. It sets out ambitious strategic objectives for the five-year period of the

plan that seek to improve access to and the use and sustainability of public libraries in line with other national strategic plans and policies.

REGIONAL SPATIAL AND ECONOMIC STRATEGY (RSES)

The RSES provides a high level development framework for the Northern and Western Region that supports the implementation of the National Planning Framework. It emphasises the importance of cultural activities and infrastructure to encouraging economic activity and notes specifically the role of libraries as a source of employment and enjoyment for residents of the region. It calls for the upgrading of cultural facilities throughout the region with priority given to those located in strategic centres such as Key Towns, of which Carrick-on-Shannon is one of the eight such designated settlements.

LEITRIM LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP)

LEITRIM LOCAL ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY PLAN (LECP) 2015-2021

The LECP provides the strategic framework for the future social, economic, and cultural development of County Leitrim in partnership with communities and other local stakeholders. For the period 2015-2021, the LECP identified the need to progress the development of library infrastructure throughout County Leitrim to improve the service's ability to provide for lifelong learning and personal development.

NEW LECP (DRAFT)

- Development of a new library development in Carrick
- Reference to the new 5 year library development plan.
- Action: 'Promoting reading and literacy development, learning and information, and community and culture in our libraries'
- References to services such as the expansion of sensory services, digital skills, delivery of the healthy Ireland programme and age-friendly initiatives which involves the library service

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL SETTING OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE CORPORATE PLAN

The corporate plan 2019-2024 sets out the Local Authority's ambitions for the county during the five year period. It specially calls for the creating of vibrant library facilities as part of a county-wide strategy to strengthen towns and villages and, in relation to heritage and culture, to ensuring that libraries remain accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of communities.

LEITRIM COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

The new County Development Plan (CDP) highlights the importance of libraries as focal points for communities, venues for the delivery of a wide range of essential services, events, and activities contributing to vibrant community life. The provision of good quality community facilities is recognised as key to development of sustainable, healthy communities across the county and it is an objective of the Council to maintain these and improve their provision especially in areas where population levels warrant such amenities.

In relation to Leitrim Library Service specifically, the CDP identifies the important community, information, cultural, education, and outreach facility role which it fulfils through its branch network. The plan notes, this role will be informed by the national library strategy 'Our Public Libraries 2022' and the expectation that all library facilities will be neutral spaces open and accessible to all. It is an objective of the Council, during the period of the plan, to support the development of library services throughout the county and the implementation of this 5-year Leitrim Library Service Development Plan, subject to funding being available.

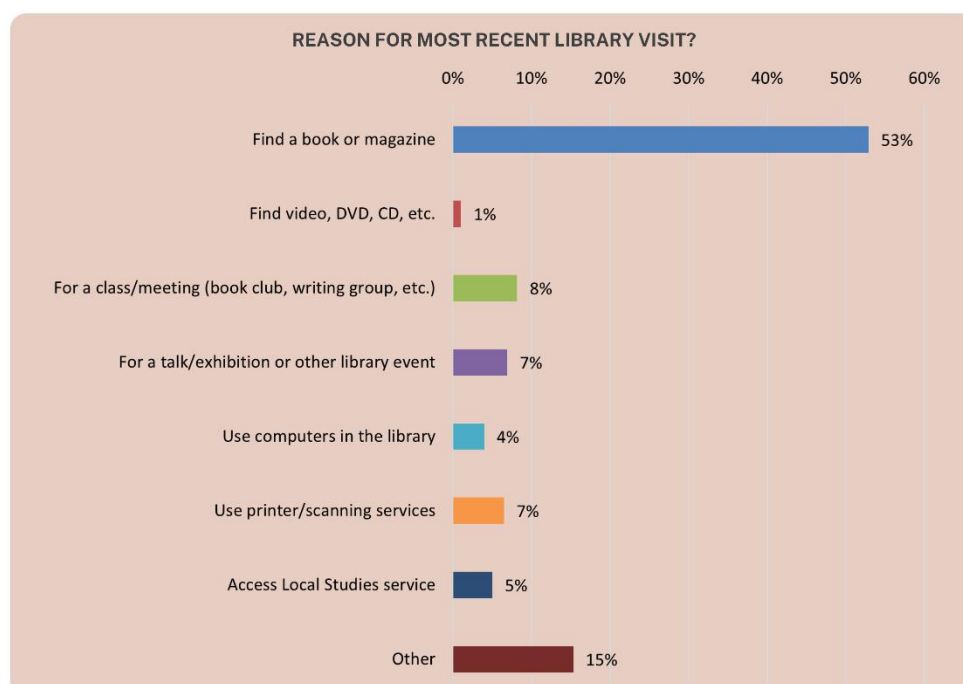
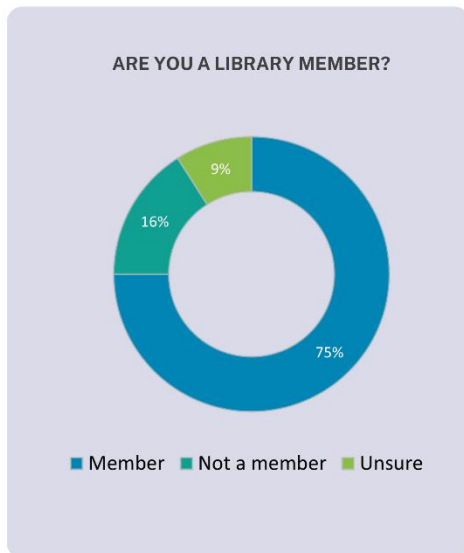
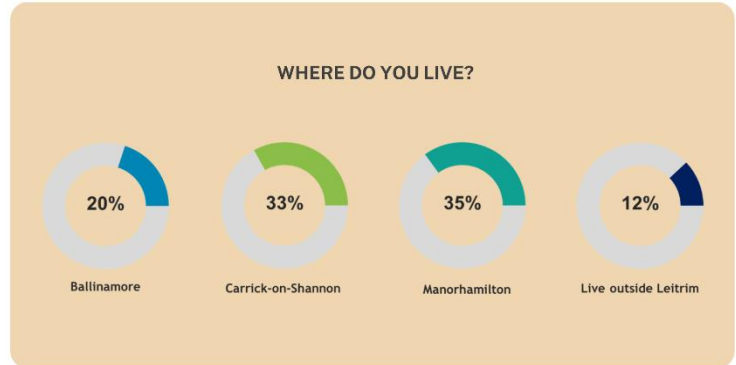
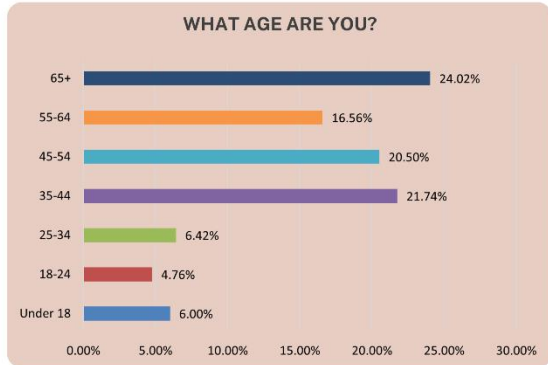
LEITRIM AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY 2022-2026

The strategy calls for Leitrim to be an inclusive, equitable place that supports older people in living full, active, valued, and healthy lives. It notes the role for the Library Service in providing information, events, intergenerational projects, and other services and supports that enable people to live healthy, socially active, and fulfilling lives in their own homes and communities.

SURVEY FEEDBACK

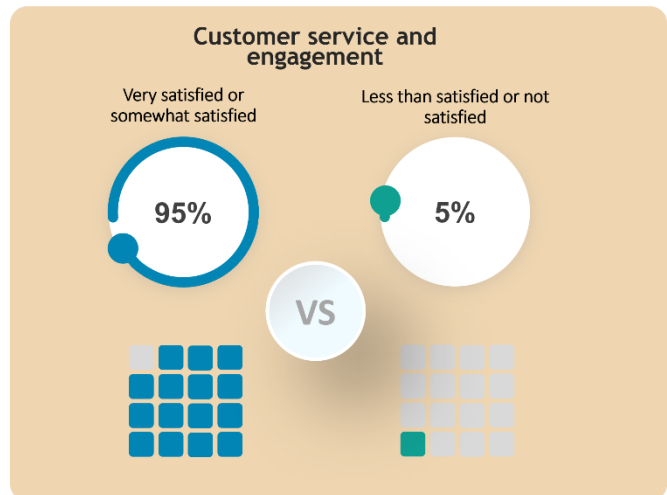
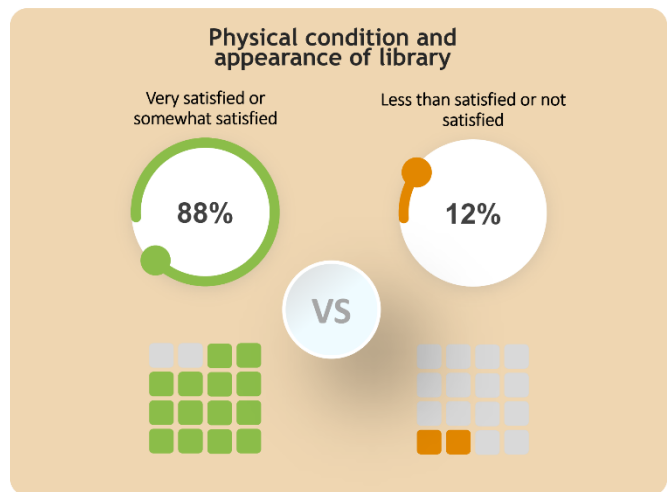
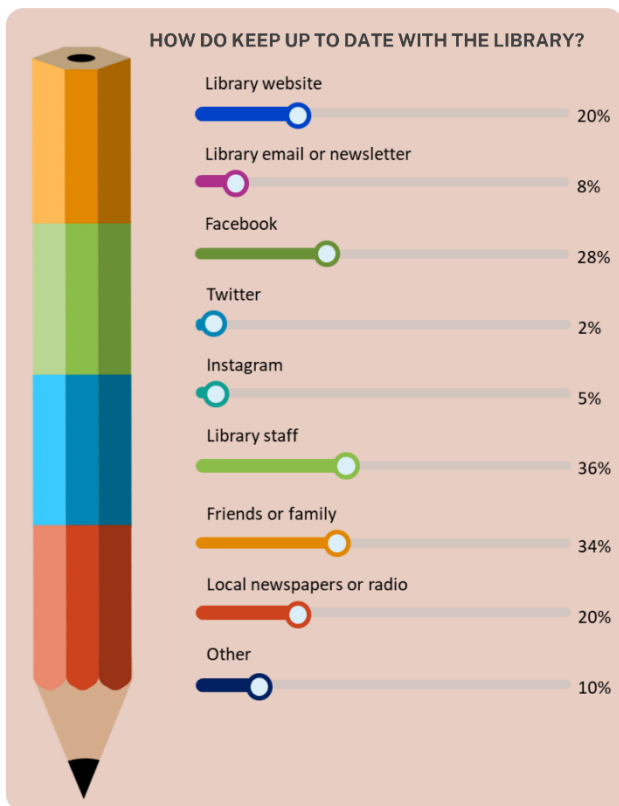
County Leitrim Library Survey

The infographic below and information on the following pages provides a summary of the feedback gathered from a public survey conducted by County Leitrim Library, online and hardcopy, in the summer of 2023.

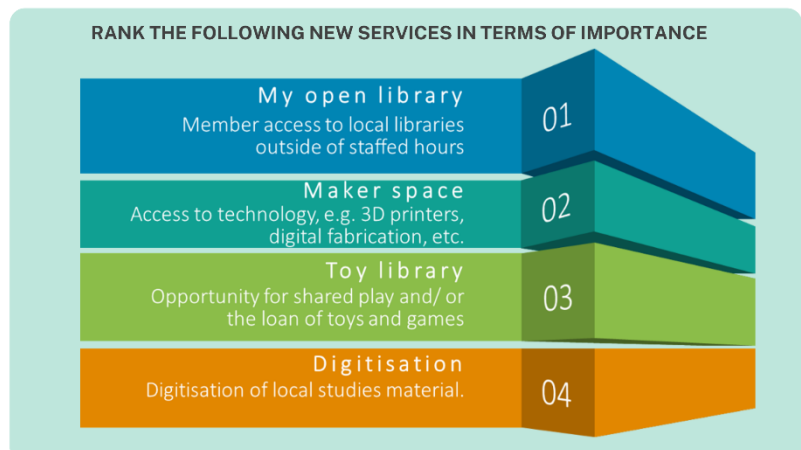
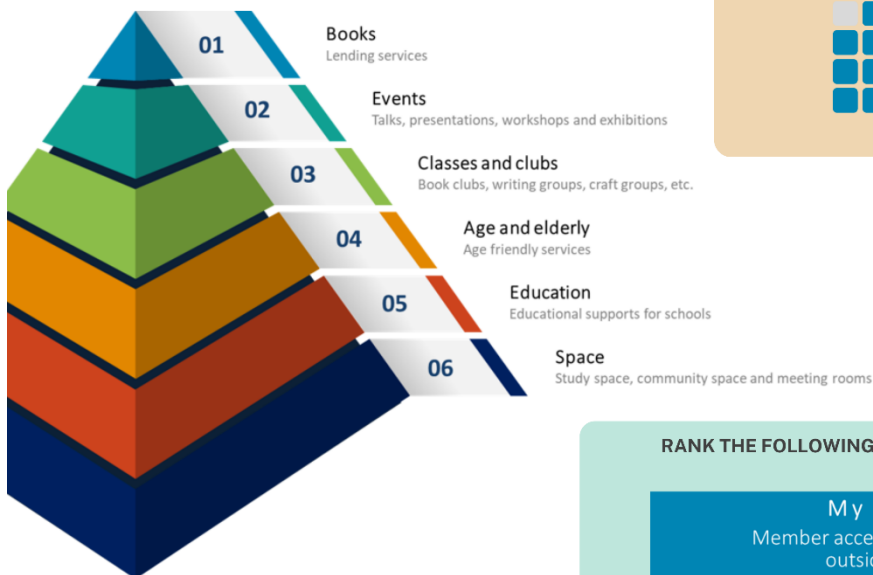


COUNTY LEITRIM LIBRARY

County Leitrim Library Survey contd.



TOP SIX MOST IMPORTANT LIBRARY SERVICES



Changes to current services

01 Opening Hours

The majority of respondents express a strong desire for longer opening hours, with several calls to have the library open on Saturdays and possibly other weekends. There's also a clear interest in evening openings. Some feedback specifically mentions the Dromahair library, Manorhamilton library, and other specific branches that should have extended hours. A few respondents wish for a return to previous opening hours and suggest that aligning opening hours with the Leitrim County Council times could be beneficial.

04 Books and Materials

The call for more books, especially physical ones, echoes throughout the feedback. Respondents also voiced concerns and suggestions about book management, ranging from streamlining inter-branch deliveries to requests regarding ebooks and a clear desire emerged for access to digital newspapers.

02 Facilities and Infrastructure

There's a consistent call for an increase in IT infrastructure. This includes more computers, printers, and a better internet connection. Many respondents are keen on seeing a physical expansion of the library, such as a bigger area for books and making better use of outdoor spaces. Some even suggest expanding into adjacent vacant buildings. Regarding amenities, there's a noticeable desire for facilities like toilets, baby changing rooms or areas, and an out-of-hours drop box for returning books. Other suggestions revolve around providing more private rooms that could be used for a range of activities, from studying to meetings and even specialized activities like 3D printing.

05 Social and Community Aspects

A significant chunk of feedback leans towards increasing engagement with the younger audience and emphasizing better communication with the public. Interestingly, there's a sentiment favouring more human interaction over the increasing trend of self-service systems. The library's role in promoting the Irish language hasn't gone unnoticed, with some feedback positively noting the presence of Irish language books.

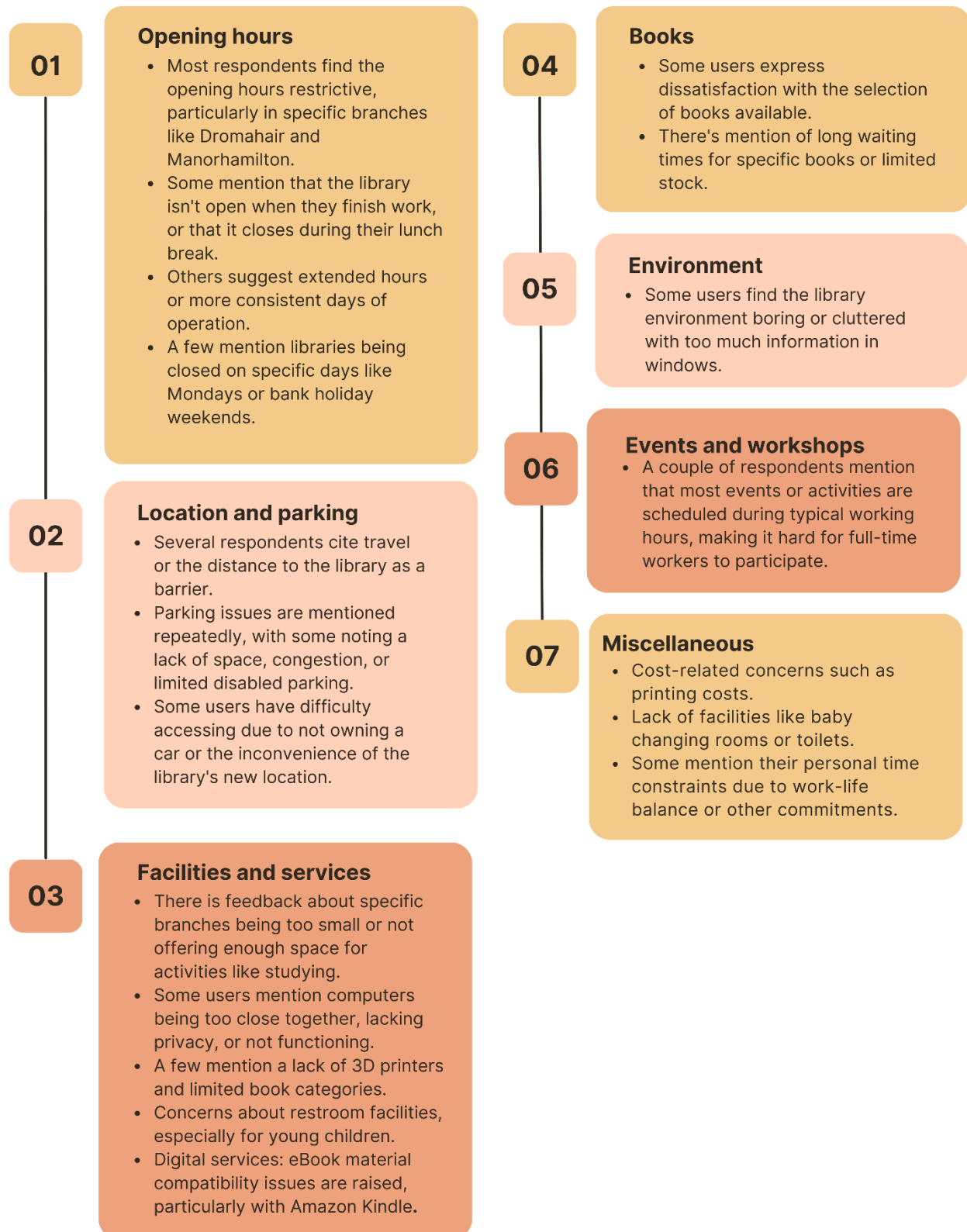
03 Services

The feedback shows a clear demand for more activities and events, especially targeting children and families. This includes workshops, courses, reading, and discussion sessions. A couple of suggestions even specified the desire for solar power and 3D courses. There's a noted emphasis on the need to place more importance on local studies, with a call to make local history archives more available and to generally improve the Local Studies section. Some respondents also expressed the desire for specific services like 3D printers, removal of the date of birth requirement when joining the library, and an improved online system, emphasizing user-friendliness.

06 Miscellaneous

A handful of suggestions were unique but valuable. These include the renovation and utilisation of outdoor spaces for diverse activities, feedback about the library's layout and design, a desire for better advertisement of services, and concerns about clarifications about whether charges are levied on users.

Barriers to use of libraries



NEW SERVICES YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE INTRODUCED

Digital services

- 3D Printing
- Digital books
- Ebooks and audio
- Kindle support
- Software lending
- VR
- Digital skills classes
- Online book index

Facilities and hours

- Increased study areas and spaces
- Meeting and workspace
- Safe spaces for teens
- Extended opening hours
- After-hours drop box
- Covered outdoor area for events

Activities

- Children's activities and workshops
- Club and group formation, book club, chess club, language, writers, arts and crafts
- Film showings
- History lessons
- Writing workshops
- Music classes

Inclusivity

- Sensory rooms
- Support for diverse groups
- Integration of new population
- Events for different ages
- Outreach to schools
- Mobile libraries

Uniqueness

- Unique lending, e.g., musical instruments, tools, software
- Arts and culture
- Coffee shop and cafe
- Craft demos
- Sustainability courses
- Music recording
- Laminating

Communication

- A better social media presence
- Greater promotion of services and events
- More regular updates
- A complaints department

FUTURE TRENDS WITHIN LIBRARIES

In common with libraires globally and nationally, Leitrim Library Service operates in a rapidly changing world, providing both opportunities and challenges as to how we do things. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions has identified trends affecting public libraries, many of which are relevant to County Leitrim and the Library Service.



- As guardians of factual information, how libraries disseminate knowledge becomes more important especially when the presence of costly paywalls, licensing arrangements, and other barriers pose challenges to the free exchange of ideas.
- Increasingly, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also posing challenges in the sharing of truthful information.
- Our library enjoys global connectivity allowing local access to ever increasing worldwide resources. This too brings challenges as to how we share, licence, and pay for information.
- The role of librarians as educators continues to evolve as the service becomes an ever increasing valued resource for lifelong learning.
- Increasingly, libraries improve upon their ability to offer immediate access to information, however, there remains a preference for many for in-person services and support which traditional library services offer, an antidote to digital overload.
- More mobile populations and a globalised user base provide both a contribution and a challenge to the relevance of local library services, especially as our audience potential stretches far beyond the borders of County Leitrim.
- As an essential community service, and a trusted provider of information, we are cognisant of external pressures upon library services, programmes, content, users, and staff, especially where a lack of respect for alternative views is encountered.

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION

County Leitrim's libraries are at the heart of our communities, leaders in enabling and supporting our citizens to be informed, connected, literate individuals, and skilled for life.

MISSION

To enrich the lives of people and communities throughout County Leitrim by fostering universal access to library spaces, information, and resources to stimulate reading and enjoyment, lifelong learning, life skills, education, and cultural engagement.

VALUES

The services provide by Leitrim Library, are underpinned by a set of values that remind us of our vision for our service in the County. These are:

Intellectual freedom – we recognise the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction.

Universal accessibility -we recognise the right of every individual to be enabled to access our library services.

Quality and excellence – we strive at all times to provide the best available service to our users

Civic participation – we seek to support those residing in Leitrim to make a positive contribution to their communities from local international levels.

Equality, inclusivity and diversity – we provide an inclusive environment, where equality is upheld and diversity respected

Trustworthiness and integrity – Our library staff, materials and spaces are a neutral environment where information is disseminated safely and accurately

Creativity, innovation and imagination – Our libraries provide spaces where creativity, innovation and imagination can thrive

THEMES AND OBJECTIVES

There are three themes upon which the Leitrim County Library Strategy 2023-2027 has been based, i.e. People, Spaces and Connections. These have been drawn, and adapted, from the National Library Strategy to ensure relevancy for County Leitrim, while adhering to national policy.

PEOPLE

READING AND LITERACY IS
AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

LIBRARIES FOR ALL

SKILLS FOR LIFE

SPACES

THE LIBRARY AS THE
CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY

OUR BUILDINGS

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

CONNECTIONS

OUR DIGITAL OFFER

CULTURE

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PEOPLE OF
LEITRIM

LIBRARY TEAM

DATA SUPPORTED AND
USER-FOCUSED SERVICE DESIGN

THEME: PEOPLE

READING AND LITERACY IS AT THE HEART OF WHAT WE DO

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim's public libraries will be at the heart of reading and literacy development within the community. We will provide opportunities for everyone to develop as literate and informed individuals and raise the profile of reading for pleasure and wellbeing in English, Irish and other languages. We will ensure that each library offers an excellent book stock, online and through the national distribution service.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will champion the Right to Read programme and Right to Read Local Network throughout County Leitrim to increase the participation of children and young people, families, and adults in reading activities.
2. We will review the annual spend per head of population during the lifetime of this strategy and seek to increase the amount spent on books year on year.
3. We will endeavour to increase public access to and enjoyment of Local Studies material.
4. We will endeavour to promote the Irish language through increased availability of services and materials, and the delivery of events in Irish in each library.
5. We will support the annual Ireland Reads national day of reading with events and activities.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work with the early learning and care sector and other stakeholders in implementing the My Little Library initiative and to ensure the provision of uniform levels of literacy and reading development supports for early childhood.
- We will engage with each primary and post-primary school in the county to improve and strengthen relationships and the provision of library services to students.
- We will work with MSLETB and other stakeholders to implement the Adult Literacy for Life strategy through our library activities.
- We will work with communities and other stakeholders to identify opportunities for making Local Studies material more accessible, to include extended hours, digitalisation of material, and sharing of resources with branch libraries.

- We will work with stakeholders and other partners to deliver high quality Irish language services through all Leitrim libraries.

THEME: PEOPLE

LIBRARIES FOR ALL

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim library service will improve life opportunities for all and address social and health inequality by providing access, free of charge, to information, ideas, collections, and study and community space. Everyone will have the opportunity to become a Leitrim library member and we will actively support disadvantaged and marginalised users, welcome new arrivals and assist with their integration into the community. Those who need assistive technologies, literacy resources and sensory equipment will be able to find them at the library and be supported in using them. Leitrim library service will welcome everyone through its doors and continue to be a free service for everyone.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will strive to increase the number of active library users in every remaining year of the strategy in order to reach, and exceed, the Our Public Libraries target of 30% of the County's population.
2. We will review and assess library opening hours and the impact of our My Open Library services to identify and inform potential new opportunities for improving access to library services.
3. We will endeavour to improve and enhance our digital services to meet the needs of isolated communities and to individuals who cannot visit their local library such as the homebound, or those in nursing homes.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work with the Healthy Leitrim Coordinator and other partners to improve and further develop the Healthy Ireland at Your Library programme.
- We will work with local ECCE service partners to implement the First 5 Little Library initiative supporting all children in the county under 6 to become library members.
- We will work with Age Friendly Leitrim and other partners to ensure that every library in the County achieves age friendly recognition by the end of the strategy period.
- Working with local schools, youth organisations, and others, we will seek to expand services and facilities for teenagers and young adults and encourage their use and enjoyment of our libraries.

- We will work in partnership with local and national funding organisations, including philanthropic sources, to support and enhance library programming focusing on all parts of the community.

THEME: PEOPLE

SKILLS FOR LIFE

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim library service will support individuals at all stages in their lives to develop and maintain the skills they require to navigate the changing world successfully. We will support lifelong learning in all its forms by acting as a trusted source of information, providing a wide range of book stock and online and print learning resources, and delivering educational events, workshops and training programmes. We will be a crucial partner in enhancing digital inclusion.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Leitrim library service will deliver, when made available, the national 'Skills for Life' umbrella programme of resources and activities, which will include:
 - Basic digital skills
 - Financial literacy
 - Media literacy
 - Business and employment skills
 - Health awareness
 - Sustainable lifestyles and environmental awareness.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work with all other relevant agencies to support Skills for Life and continue the provision of specific programming, technology, and facilities for disadvantaged and marginalised library users throughout the county.
- We will ensure that existing services and collaborations with organisations such as the MSLETB and Healthy Ireland, are promoted through Leitrim based elements of the Skills for Life campaign where appropriate.

THEME: SPACES

THE LIBRARY AS THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim libraries are central to our towns and villages where they are located. As the only civic spaces in many communities, we will continue to offer trusted and welcoming facilities that encourage community participation and are accessible and relevant to everyone. We will expand our role as the frontline information service for the local authorities, continue to signpost users to other reliable agencies and sources of information and design any new services and spaces in partnership with the community.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will continue to increase the number of active library users in every remaining year of the strategy to reach, and exceed, the Our Public Libraries target of 30% of the County's population.
2. We endeavour to provide better access to meeting, study, and social space within our libraries and to ensure this is freely accessible for individuals, local organisations, and groups.
3. We will work with the local community and other stakeholders in exploring options for re-establishing library services in Kinlough during the period of this strategy.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work with other government departments and agencies to explore potential additional funding sources for projects focused on the development of library facilities.
- We will work with other government departments and agencies to explore potential support for the development of areas for children and families in libraries in line with the First 5 strategy.
- We will continue work with the County Leitrim Local Community Development Committee to ensure the continuing development of library services in accordance with the Leitrim Local Economic and Community Plan.

THEME: SPACES

OUR BUILDINGS

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim libraries will enable communities to make maximum use of library services and facilities, including spaces for community engagement, research, education, and recreation. Our libraries will continue to provide up-to-date ICT infrastructure and increase broadband speeds to support the development and roll-out of new and innovative services.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. Leitrim library service will endeavour to address and adhere to the objectives of the New Public Library Standards and Benchmarks to be published during the period of this strategy.
2. We will seek funding for the refurbishment and improving of all library facilities in response to local needs and national strategies in relation to libraries, communities, and Sustainable Development Goals objectives, as detailed elsewhere in this plan.
3. All new and refurbished library buildings in the County will be developed to best meet local community needs and will strive to meet the highest standards of construction, energy efficiency, capital project management and compliance, accessibility, and service delivery.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development, Leitrim County Council and County Leitrim Local Community Development Committee to ensure renovations and new builds reach the required structural and service standards

THEME: SPACES

SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

OUR AMBITION

Public libraries will make a significant contribution to local, national, and international climate and environmental objectives by providing information, knowledge, and programmes for the community. We will provide our users with energy awareness and green lifestyle resources and promote awareness of libraries' contribution to Ireland's circular economy.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. All new and refurbished library facilities will support the objectives of the new Leitrim Climate Action Plan in relation to energy efficiency and sustainability targets.
2. All libraries will provide information to the public supporting Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Climate Action Plans, to include the Leitrim Climate Action Plan.
3. All Leitrim libraries will offer users access to resources to support home energy saving awareness and assessment.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will work in partnership with the Local Authority and others to ensure the delivery of our public library objectives under the National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024.
- We will engage with Leitrim County Council Climate Team and others to ensure library service involvement in the implementation of the Leitrim Climate Action Plan.

THEME: CONNECTIONS

OUR DIGITAL OFFER

OUR AMBITION

Leitrim library service will support users to navigate the digital world and will provide access to the appropriate technologies to do this. We will provide a wide range of trusted information sources, both in print form and digitally, and ensure that skilled library staff are available to advise users on how to identify and access reliable information. Recognising the increase in usage of online services during the pandemic, we will ensure all existing and new members are provided with access to eBooks and other digital resources to facilitate lifelong learning, on a cost-effective basis to the public library sector.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will continue to liaise with partners to ensure the accessibility and ease of use of the Library Management System to optimise the user experience.
2. We will avail of and promote the use of Apps for access to the catalogue, digital resources, and other Leitrim library services as they are developed.
3. We will endeavour to locally implement the national media literacy programme for staff and users.
4. We will explore opportunities for the digitalisation of local studies material to ensure that this is as accessible as possible to library users and the wider public no matter where they live.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- Throughout the strategy we will work with our partners to explore the expansion and improvement of community access to digital library resources.
- We will work with local communities and other stakeholders in progressing the digitalisation of local studies material.

THEME: CONNECTIONS

CULTURE

OUR AMBITION

Our Leitrim public libraries will be centres of cultural activity, inspiring and encouraging creativity and hosting free cultural experiences. We will produce and support local cultural events, festivals, exhibitions, and residency programmes, working with the creative community at all levels. We will harness the enthusiasm generated by the Decade of Centenaries and Creative Ireland programmes and work with our local communities and partners to collect, explore, preserve, and celebrate cultural memories.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will endeavour to implement new initiatives that will improve user online access to cultural heritage, local history, and other materials.
2. We will create and hold events, activities, and exhibitions as part of national festivals celebrating Ireland's culture such as Criunniú na nÓg, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Bealtaine, Heritage Week and Culture Night.
3. We will continue to facilitate and promote the use of our libraries as venues for cultural activities and events within our communities.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will continue to engage with Leitrim County Council's Creative Ireland team and others to explore opportunities for collaboration and will maintain the high levels of involvement in partnership locally through Creative Communities programmes.
- We will continue to engage with both statutory, non-statutory, and community-based organisations at local level, to explore opportunities for cultural collaboration.
- We will work with stakeholders and partners in strengthening the roles of our library as a gateway to, and transmitter of, cultural works, skills and European values, as outlined in the European Union Work Plan for Culture 2023-2026.

THEME: CONNECTIONS

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PEOPLE OF LEITRIM

OUR AMBITION

We will engage with national and local partners in promoting library services to ensure that we reach all local audiences, to include mutual promotion activities with library partners.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will actively manage and promote the use of social media to improve library service communicating with users and the general public.
2. We will avail of national support for developing and implementing a local promotional marketing campaign focusing on increasing library membership and use.
3. We will actively participate in annual national public libraries open days to showcase what we have to offer our service users and local communities.
4. We will ensure that library staff receive training in relation to marketing and communications.
5. We will deliver a dedicated central library services website providing information on all library facilities, programmes, and services available in the county.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will continue to liaise with local media networks and community groups to promote our services locally.
- We will continue liaise with National Library Networks to promote library services nationally.
- We will work to ensure connectivity and alignment of the library service website and social media with Leitrim County Council's online presence.

THEME: CONNECTIONS

LIBRARY TEAM

OUR AMBITION

Our Leitrim library staff are a key element of this strategy. Their skills, customer service, and commitment have created the impressive range of services that we have today. By valuing and investing in our library staff, we can achieve our ambition of placing libraries firmly at the heart of every community.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will ensure that our libraries and library services are adequately staffed to deliver the services expected by our users and local communities.
2. We will endeavour to ensure that staff skills gaps are addressed through structured programmes, mentoring and training.
3. We will avail of comprehensive training supports to help staff develop and expand their digital skills and to support better digital services in, and digital promotion of, our libraries.
4. We will avail of national leadership programme opportunities for library staff.
5. We will endeavour to recruit and retain library staff to ensure we have a committed and diverse staff suitable for the delivery of library services during the strategy period.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will continue to liaise with Leitrim County Council around workforce development.
- We will continue to collaborate with Libraries Ireland staff training opportunities.

THEME: CONNECTIONS

DATA SUPPORTED AND USER-FOCUSED SERVICE DESIGN

OUR AMBITION

We will understand the needs of our communities through collection and analysis of data and development of needs analysis and impact evaluation frameworks and will provide services on that basis. We will support this through streamlined and effective mechanisms for recording and analysing library service-related data.



OUR STRATEGIC ACTIONS

1. We will utilise the proposed data dashboard to inform and support decision making and service design, to include future plans for a public facing version.
2. We will avail of national library training and other supports provided to implement updated evaluation and impact frameworks.
3. We will utilise nationally provided user-centred design approaches to inform service design and development.

OUR STRATEGIC ALIGNMENTS

- We will continue to engage closely with Leitrim County Council in ensuring consistent levels of investment in library data services.