Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

Oldham Council Libraries Update

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Purpose of the Report

To provide an update on Oldham Council Libraries' Performance, highlighting the outreach work to reach non-users and disengaged readers.

Recommendations
To note the report.

Overview and Scrutiny Board 21st January 2020

Oldham Council Libraries Update

1. **Background**

Oldham Libraries vision is to to be among the best library services in the country; a service that is synonymous with high quality, creative and innovative service provision.

We will do this by ensuring our libraries are:

- rooted within, and responsive to, the communities we serve
- have welcoming, animated and flexible spaces
- offer a wide range of free accessible books, information and digital resources, and cultural experiences for all ages
- have skilled, knowledgeable and happy staff

As a statutory service we are committed to being open and accessible to all our residents and users. Finite resources and the on-going need to find efficiencies present challenges to our ability to reach everyone in the borough. Only through the systematic and effective use of data, partnership working and process review can we ensure that the Library Service continues to offer a comprehensive and efficient service as required by the 1964 Act.

The report highlights the Library service's outreach activity which aims to reach and engage with non-users of the service, those that are traditionally hard to reach or those that have disengaged from the service.

2. **Current Position**

Oldham Libraries serves a population of 228,000. Our current active members (someone who has borrowed a book, used the library PC's or accessed wifi at Oldham Library), averages approximately 38,000 people per annum.

Fig1. Active Book Borrowers by Ward

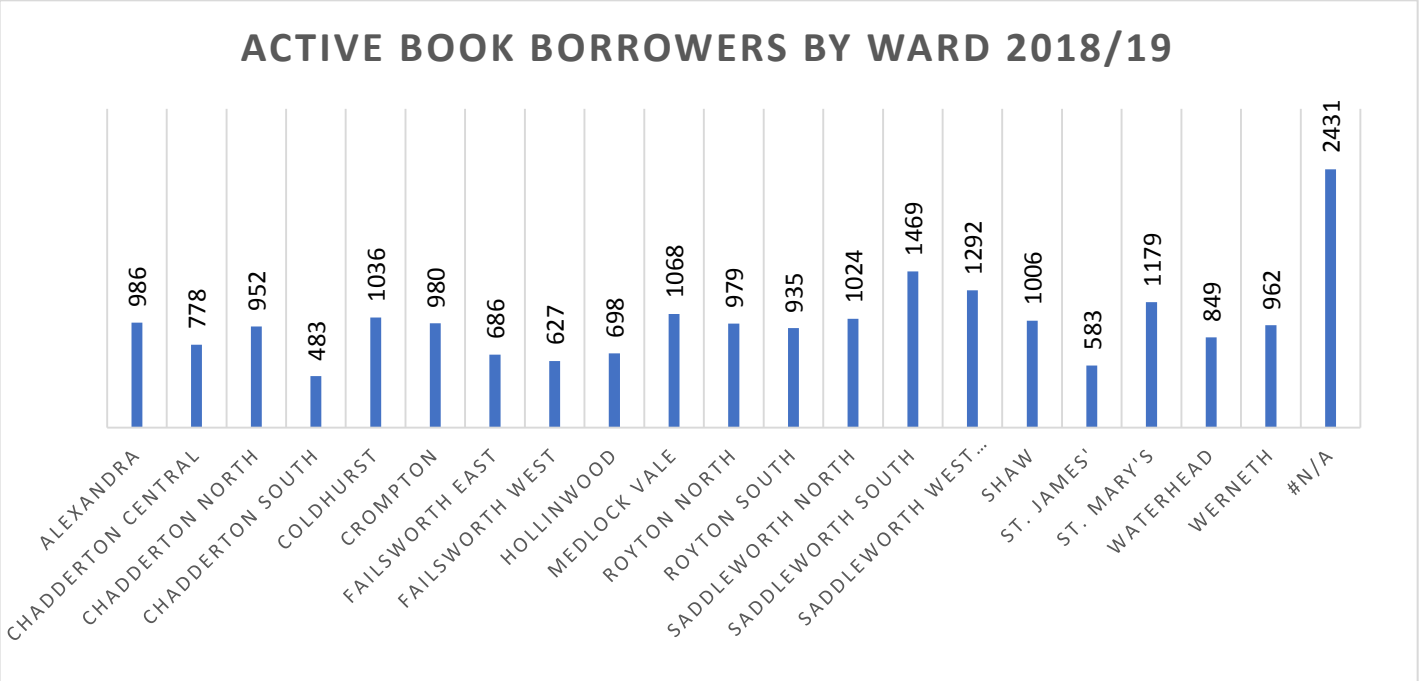
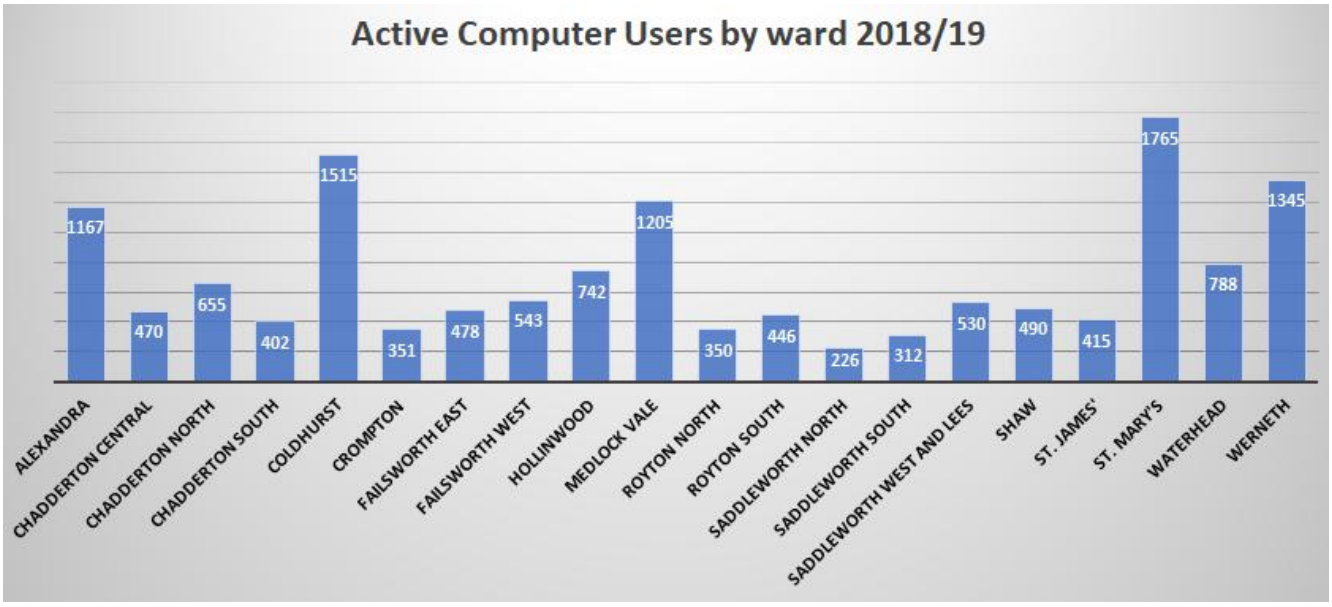


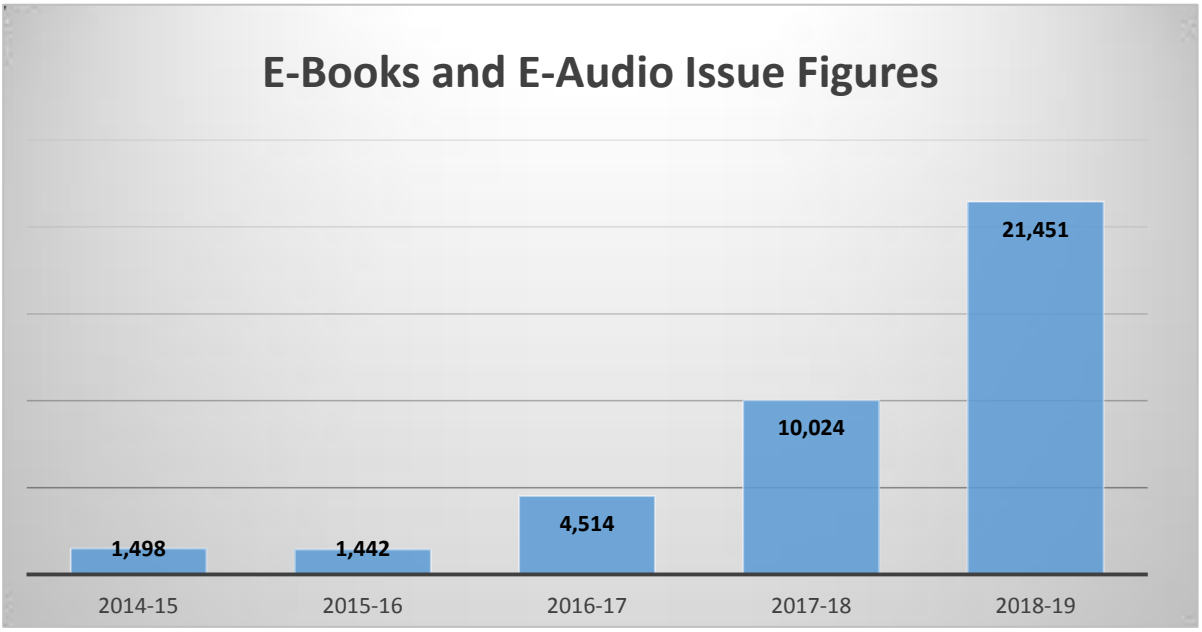
Fig 2 Active Computer Users by Ward 2018/19



Book borrowing in wards where libraries have been closed (St James and South Chadderton) is lower. It is encouraging to see that the active computer users for these wards is comparable to other areas such as Crompton, and Shaw and higher than some of the Saddleworth areas.

However, the above two charts do not include customers that download e-books or access online resources. We can see from the chart below that our e-books and E-audio issues have risen exponentially over the last 5 years however we cannot access this data by ward level.

Fig 3. E-book and E-audio Issue Figures



Similarly, the figures above also do not include those people that use the service to attend cultural programmes, children's events or to use the space to work, study or socialize.

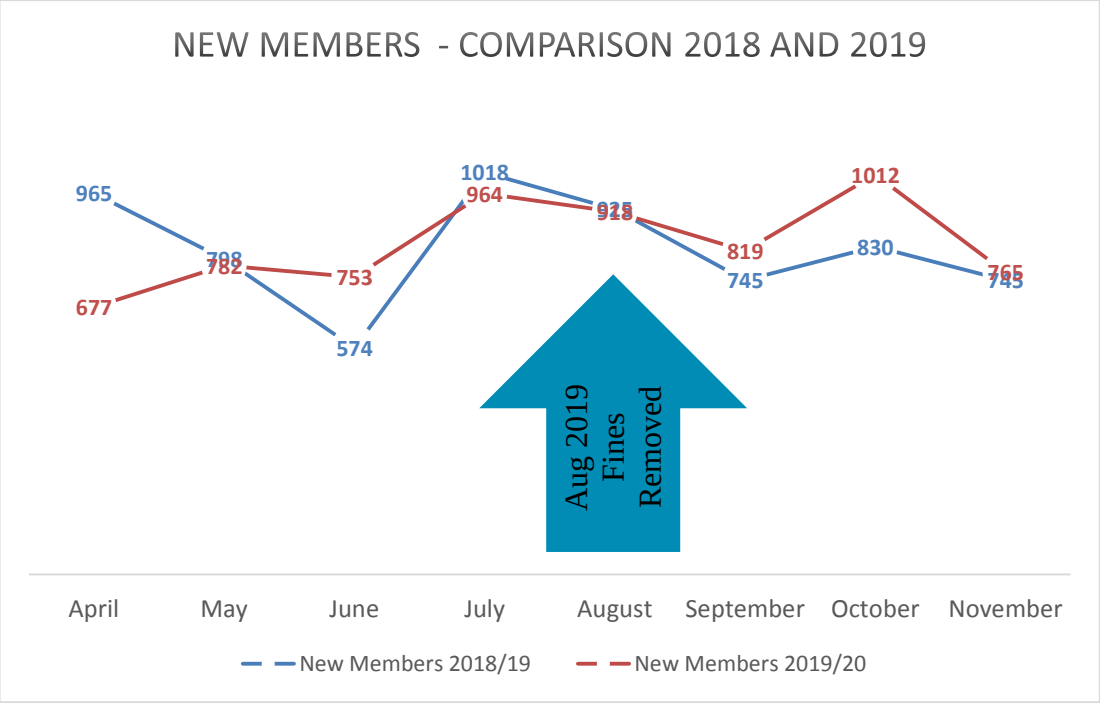
We recognize that there is more targeted work that we can do in these wards to both promote the fines free policy for book returns, the e-book offer, work with schools to encourage class visits and develop strong local community relationships. We are working with Business Intelligence to improve the data sets on the Thriving Communities Index so we can better plan and target our resources. We will also be conducting, in Feb-Mar 2020, a customer consultation specifically targeting non-users of the service to better understand their needs and motivations and ensure that through our library strategy we do what we can to address these.

3. **What are we doing to increase usage in areas of low engagement and audiences that are hard to reach?**

3.1 Removing barriers to access

Oldham Libraries removed fines for overdue books in August 2019. Research and data have shown that library fines do not encourage the timely return of books. Adversely it acts as a barrier to access for those that cannot afford to pay the fines. Analysis of Oldham data showed that those in the most disadvantaged wards were restricted from borrowing as a result of incurring fines.

Although it is too early to show the full impact of the fines removal policy, early positive indicators show that there has been an increase in library membership figures since fines were removed in August 2019 compared to the same period last year.



3.2 Reaching out to Homeless people

Library staff have held sessions for homeless people with the charity Street Angels at their town centre base, to speak to users about the library offer and encourage homeless people to join and take part in library activities.

In July 2019, we ran a series of 3 zine making workshops for rough sleepers who created a zine which they presented to the Mayor of GM to help to convey their lived experience of sleeping rough in Oldham. We worked with Street Angels to deliver this short project.

Since November 2019 we are working with If Oldham to deliver a weekly art club at Oldham Library. Homeless people take part in and help to run simple craft sessions that are attended by families. These sessions raise awareness of what the library has to offer homeless people and encourages them to take an active role in the library community.

Planned for January 2020 - Provision of tablets loaded with digital library content (ebooks, magazines and newspapers) to users of the night shelter in Oldham. We will work with If Oldham to facilitate this offer.

We are also exploring being a pilot site for the Universal Pass programme and to distribute emergency food vouchers during the holiday period.

3.3 Welcoming Refugees and Asylum Seekers - Libraries of Sanctuary.

In partnership with Manchester and Bolton Libraries, we have secured £45k funding to develop libraries in Northmoor, Chadderton and Oldham as Libraries of Sanctuary; ensuring our libraries are welcoming spaces for refugees and asylum seekers.

a) We are working with partners and community groups to deliver a programme of creative learning and cultural activities that ensures that new migrant communities, refugees and asylum seekers are welcomed to Oldham.

Programme of activities to date:

Event	Date	Library	Number attending
Zine making	11.6.19	Oldham	13
Zine making	18.6.19	Chadderton	2
Jo Cox get together	21.6.19	Northmoor	15
Dual language story walk	2.7.19	Oldham	25
Dual language story walk	9.7.19	Chadderton	36
Dual language story time	27.8.19	Northmoor	16
Learning Circles taster	20.8.19	Oldham	6
Learning Circles taster	30.8.19	Chadderton	3
Number Ninjas	12.9.19	Northmoor	10
Number Ninjas	20.9.19	Oldham	10
Number Ninjas	26.9.19	Chadderton	15
Autumn Gardening Taster Session	28.10.19	Chadderton	23
Autumn Gardening Taster Session	1.11.19	Northmoor	19
Autumn Gardening Taster Session	2.11.19	Oldham	17
Christmas gift giving and crafts	20.12.19	Northmoor	45
Christmas gift giving and crafts	17.12.19	Oldham	28
Christmas gift giving and crafts	17.12.19	Chadderton	31

Total number of attendees (monthly events) - 314

b) We are also delivering Learning Circles; Informal English conversation classes at Oldham, Chadderton and Northmoor Libraries. Run termly, in 6-week blocks, they are being well attended at Oldham and Northmoor with a new one being established at Chadderton Library.

c) We have secured funding to create a reading garden on wasteland outside Northmoor Library. The gardening club was co-created with attendees of Learning Circles at Northmoor Library and is also attended by newly arrived families whose children attend Northmoor Academy. This encourages new arrivals to take part in community events and settle into the area.

d) The Libraries of Sanctuary programme also funded families in temporary accommodation to attend the Christmas show 'The Secret of Christmas Eve' at Oldham Library. This will be the first time many of these communities will have attended a cultural show.

e) We are working with the Emerging Communities Team to deliver monthly library tours to groups of refugees and asylum seekers who are new to the Borough.

f) Bestseller Onjali Q. Rauf, author of The Boy at the Back of the Class, will be visiting Oldham Library in January to talk about her book based on a young refugee's experience of settling in to life in the UK. Approximately 300 children from schools in areas where numbers of new arrivals are high, will attend.

g) Library staff have also attended the weekly drop in at the Baptist Church to promote the library offer to refugees and asylum seekers.

h) In addition, we are working with Birmingham Libraries and Libraries Connected, our national sector support organization, to develop a national framework and toolkit to support other libraries to become Libraries of Sanctuary.

3.4 Tackling Loneliness and Social Isolation

The Reading Friends programme is reaching those that are at risk of social isolation and loneliness. This year we were successful in attracting an additional £71,000 to roll the scheme out across the Greater Manchester Region. Oldham's group has also featured in the national press as part of The Times Christmas Appeal supporting The Reading Agency charity.
https://www.thetimes.co.uk/edition/news/christmas-appeal-power-of-books-brings-memories-back-to-life-mmvdhxsq3?shareToken=3a9e369479661769fa2c8859a73cd7b8

We have worked with a number of Reading Friends groups across the Borough:

- Low Vision Group at St Pauls court (Hathershaw area)
- Royton Library- Small dementia group that meets in the library.
- Springboard (St Pauls Church, Royton) – Larger Dementia group and their carers.
- Holland Court (Delph)- Private housing association residents
- Anglo West Indian Group (Hathershaw area) – meet at a local community centre
- Young LGBT group at Oldham Library (Coldhurst)

The groups take part in a wide range of activities that inspire reading for pleasure and improve wellbeing including arts and crafts, learning to use devices for audio books, reading aloud, visits to local libraries, guest speakers, memory boxes, attending live performances at Oldham Library and Singing for the Brain sessions. The groups have also enjoyed stories from African storytellers as part of Black History Month.

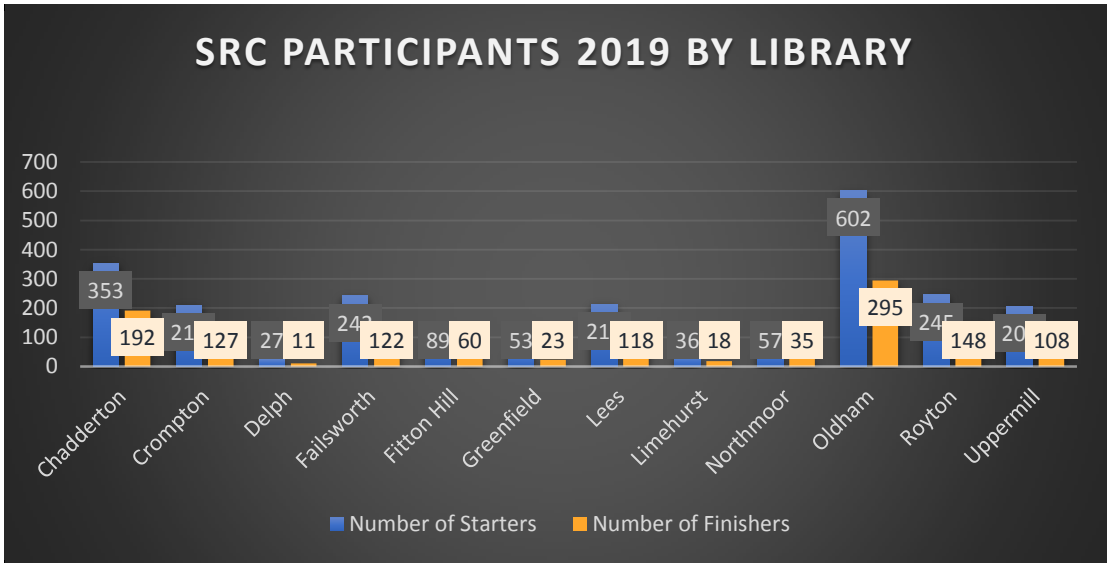
3.5 Children and Families

We are working with schools in all wards in the borough to promote reading for pleasure, encourage families reading together and to support school readiness.

a) Number Ninja's project – At Royton Library we ran 34 Number Ninja sessions from January to October 2019 with 392 visits from children. The project expanded to include Mini Number Ninjas and sessions for the Libraries of Sanctuary project. Feedback forms from parents and carers indicated that 85% thought that attending a session 'increased their child's interest in mathematics through play', 65% thought attendance 'increased their child's confidence in mathematics'. We worked with The School Improvement Team, local Schools, The New Arrivals Team, The Council Family Information team, and Royton Community team to promote the sessions.

We have as a result of this project embedded numeracy into all our Rhyme time sessions and in 2020 we will be running training sessions for other library authorities so Number Ninjas can be run as stand-alone sessions or as part of the local GM STEM agenda.

b) Summer Reading Challenge, 2,334 children took part in the SRC in 2019. Staff visited the majority of primary schools to promote the challenge.



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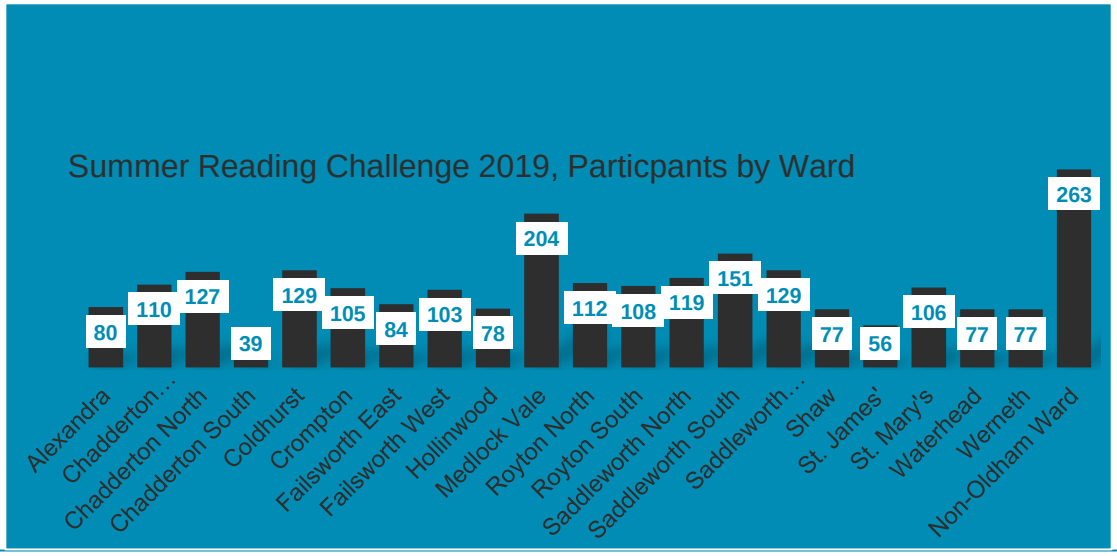


areas where libraries have closed, Stoneleigh in St James and Broadway in Chadderton South, we can see the lowest levels of SRC participation. We will undertake targeted work with the schools in these wards over the next year to encourage SRC participation.

Targeted work this year was undertaken to engage with families and schools at Fitton Hill Library following a lot of anti-social behavior in the area. As a result, the SRC participation rate for that library rose by 25% and two library assistants, Tia Boucher and Nazet Yaqub have been shortlisted for Frontline Service Award in Oldham's Top Awards.

c) Class visits – in the 2018-19 academic term we welcomed 37 schools to Oldham Libraries for a class visit that includes an introduction to the library, storytelling and research skills. Gallery and Library staff presented a paper about the Schools offer at an Education portfolio brief and are subsequently being invited to attend and link with primary and secondary heads of school network to better promote our offers.

We are also promoting the GM £1 tram scheme to encourage more school visitors.

d) Storywalks – we have been working closely with Parks and wider partners to reach new audiences and have conducted various themed story walks across the Borough:

- Moston Brook Canal, Failsworth
- Delph Village and Park
- Alexandra Park
- One planned in Stoneleigh in the new year
- Tandle Hill Park, Royton
- Chadderton Hall Park
- Dovestone, Greenfield
- Little Owl Farm, Denshaw

The storywalks attract new audiences and promote health and wellbeing, through creative and interactive storytelling.

e) Bookstart Programme.

This year we have signed a three-year agreement with Booktrust to ensure that:

- all children born in Oldham will receive a booktrust bag with a free book and library card with an invitation to join the library. This is delivered in partnership with Health Visiting Teams and Children's Centre's.
- all children aged 3-4 will receive a treasure pack via nursery settings prior to starting reception.
- Time to Read - free book pack for every reception aged child delivered directly to schools.
- Bookstart Corner – packs delivered to Children's Centre's to encourage families to read for pleasure together.

3.6 Poverty Proofing and Holiday Hunger.

In partnership with If Oldham we are now delivering food to children and families and the homeless during the holiday period to combat food poverty. We are reaching new audiences in some of our most deprived wards through this initiative. To date we have distributed 1293 portions of food to children and

families in Oldham. We will also be adding a community fridge to Oldham Library in the new year.

One of our staff members has also had training to deliver poverty proofing audits in schools, and we will be exploring how libraries may also be poverty proofed for the future.

3.7 Reaching people with low digital and science skills

We have secured £1,000 Barclays bank funding to reach people with low digital skills and we were also chosen by the BBC to pilot their Virtual Reality programmes. In addition, we have secured £1,000 to deliver Science Week activities in Northmoor library to help reach people from low socioeconomic BAME background, inspiring a new generation of young people to enter careers in the science fields.

3.8 Looked After Children

We have established a Foster Carers Group at Oldham Library and registered for the letterbox project for Looked after Children in partnership with the Virtual School. We have reached 131 looked after children through the scheme this year. Each child receives their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high-quality materials once every month for six months, from May to October. For many children, it's the first time they have had a letter or a parcel through the post and for some it's the first time they have had books of their own.

3.9 Autism Friendly Libraries

As part of our commitment to be part of the Greater Manchester Autism friendly region, Oldham library staff, along with GM library colleagues, have had autism awareness training delivered by Autism in the Arts and we will be receiving some funding to make small physical changes/buy equipment for libraries.

In addition, a touring escape room experience will be delivered in GM libraries; an immersive escape-room like experience designed in collaboration with a young, autistic theatre maker and groups of autistic young people. This will tour round 10 libraries, in each of the ten GM districts with a target audience of autistic young people and young adults. The initiative is part of Great Places, a GM programme funded by Arts Council and National Heritage Lottery Fund to put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of successful communities across England.

We are also supporting an artist to submit an ACE bid that will curate cultural performances in libraries targeted at autism groups and their carers.

3.10 Home Library Service

A mixed model of delivery of the Home Library Service is now offered to residents of Oldham who are unable to visit the library in person. This includes access to the RNIB service, collection service by a friend or family, or home delivery service by a volunteer.

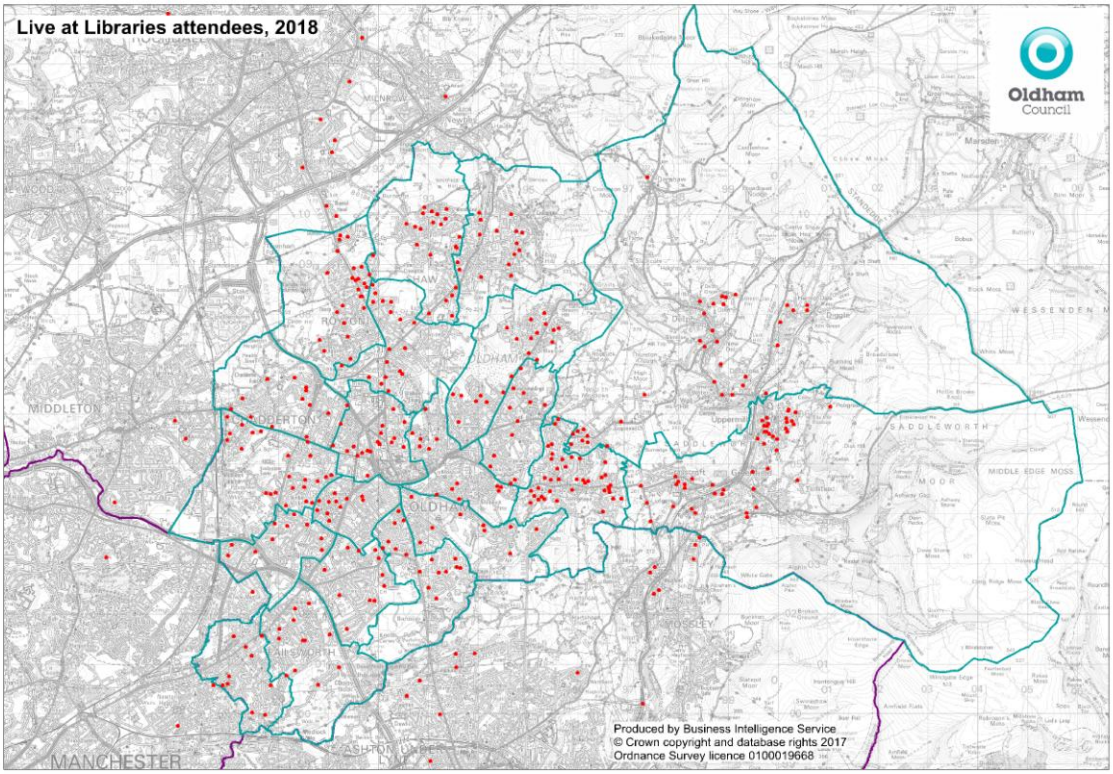
3.11 Young Volunteers

Data shows us that young people aged 13-19, only make up 8% of our active borrowers to borrow books and 12% to use the computers. To ensure we are reaching out to them and developing services that are relevant to them, we are

working with a group of young volunteers and the youth council to consult, design and deliver services. We want to ensure young people's voices are heard and represented and that they are advocates of the service to their peers. This is a new programme and we will report on progress and outcomes from this in the future.

3.12 Cultural Programming.

Oldham Library's cultural programme aims to ensure that library users have access to high quality cultural experiences at low or no cost. Our diverse programming also attracts new audiences to the libraries from across the borough – see graph below.
We have also reached out to schools, for example for 'The Secret of Christmas Eve' production, we welcomed 15 different schools from across Oldham to see the musical Christmas show from Oldham Theatre Workshop. Three of the schools that visited were schools with provision for young people with learning and/or physical disabilities and Hodge Clough Primary (Moorside) is based in a ward where the library was closed as a budget saving.



4. **Other highlights for the library service in the last year include**:

4.1 We attracted 1.3million visitors to the service in 2018/19 (second highest in GM and 6th highest in the NW)

4.2 Partnership with People Plus to support SME's and we have submitted a joint bid with 8 GM Library authorities for European Regional Development Funding to further support SME'S targeting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, BAME and women.

4.3 Refresh of all public and staff PC's supporting flexible working and access to digital resources

4.4 Capital funding secured to refresh all self-service machines in all our libraries, supporting residents to self-serve.

4.5 Launch of Take Part website – joint venture with gallery, archives and arts to encourage and engage with volunteers

4.6 Funding from Get Oldham Growing to create a reading garden at Greenfield Library

4.7 Oldham Libraries profile has been raised nationally:

- Subnum Hariff-Khan, Library and Information Manager, recognized in the Queen's honours and awarded a British Empire Medal for services to Public Libraries.
- Oldham's Reading Friends project profiled in The Times Christmas Appeal.
- Two staff presented at National Library conferences

4.8 Annual Report 2018/19 highlighting key performance statistics is included in **Appendix A**

3 Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss

3.1 To consider library outreach activity mentioned above and the new initiatives and partnerships aimed to ensure widest possible access within resource parameters.

4 Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider

4.1 Overview and Scrutiny to consider the opportunities to develop a stronger library service; that delivers more innovative services that meet local needs and the challenge of balancing that with funding opportunities and increasing library visitor figures.

5. Links to Corporate Outcomes

5.1 As a uniquely trusted and accessible public service in the heart of our communities, Libraries are in a good position to support Oldham's co-operative ambition. By working with a resident focus Libraries provide a cradle-to-grave service which empowers residents to make positive choices in their lives and make real and beneficial changes for themselves and their community.

5.2 Oldham Council Libraries delivering against Corporate Priorities

An inclusive economy where people and enterprise thrive

Oldham Council libraries supports this objective by providing access to:

- Business support, including resources and events to support business start-ups as well as established businesses
- Employment support, including work clubs, jobs fair, resources and information
- Digital services, including free access to PCs, the internet and Wi-Fi ; and a 24/7 digital library service
- Learning support, including support for digital literacy and inclusion with Online Basics sessions at all libraries; books and resources to support learning and encourage 'intellectual journeys', signposting to learning opportunities, a programme of events and talks, including Ignite Talks and Tedx Oldham
- A Tourist Information Service, promoting Oldham as tourist destination and providing travel and transport information

- Reading and literacy support through a wide ranging book / resource collection, reading groups, writing groups, an annual Bookmark festival and other literature events, and a children's and schools programme which includes The Summer Reading Challenge and the Brilliant Books Book Award
- Cultural offer, attracting businesses and visitors to the town centre.

Thriving communities where everyone is empowered to do their bit

Oldham Library Service aims to meet this objective by providing access to:

- A network of libraries, some of which are co-located with other key agencies, and all of which are located in prime positions in each major district; libraries fulfil the role of community hubs, providing access to free community space, information and resources (including staffing) so empowering local people to do more for themselves
- Free advice sessions such as CAB and housing support
- Health support, including information and signposting, events (eg Health Awareness Day), resources such as Books on Prescription, and staff trained to help customers access reliable health information resources. All frontline library staff will be trained as Dementia Friends
- Council information, including information to support local democracy
- Volunteering opportunities, work experience and traineeships
- A cultural programme of events and activities through live@thelibrary which includes music, theatre and literature performances
- Local studies collections, and support for those researching their history with access to Ancestry and Find My Past online resources

Co-operative Services with people and social value at their heart.

Oldham Library Service aims to meet this objective by providing access to:

- High quality service provision, including high quality environments, high quality resources and excellent customer service, with a focus on 'getting it right'
- Accessible services, including stock in different formats and languages, assistive technology, accessible buildings.
- An inclusive service for all members of the community, including assistive technology and the Celebrate programme
- Support for older people, including Library at Home service
- Support for children and families, including Bounce and Rhyme, Stories and Rhymes, baby events
- Support for young people, including homework help, Get It Loud In Libraries programme and volunteering opportunities
- Value for money service

6 Additional Supporting Information

6.1 n/a

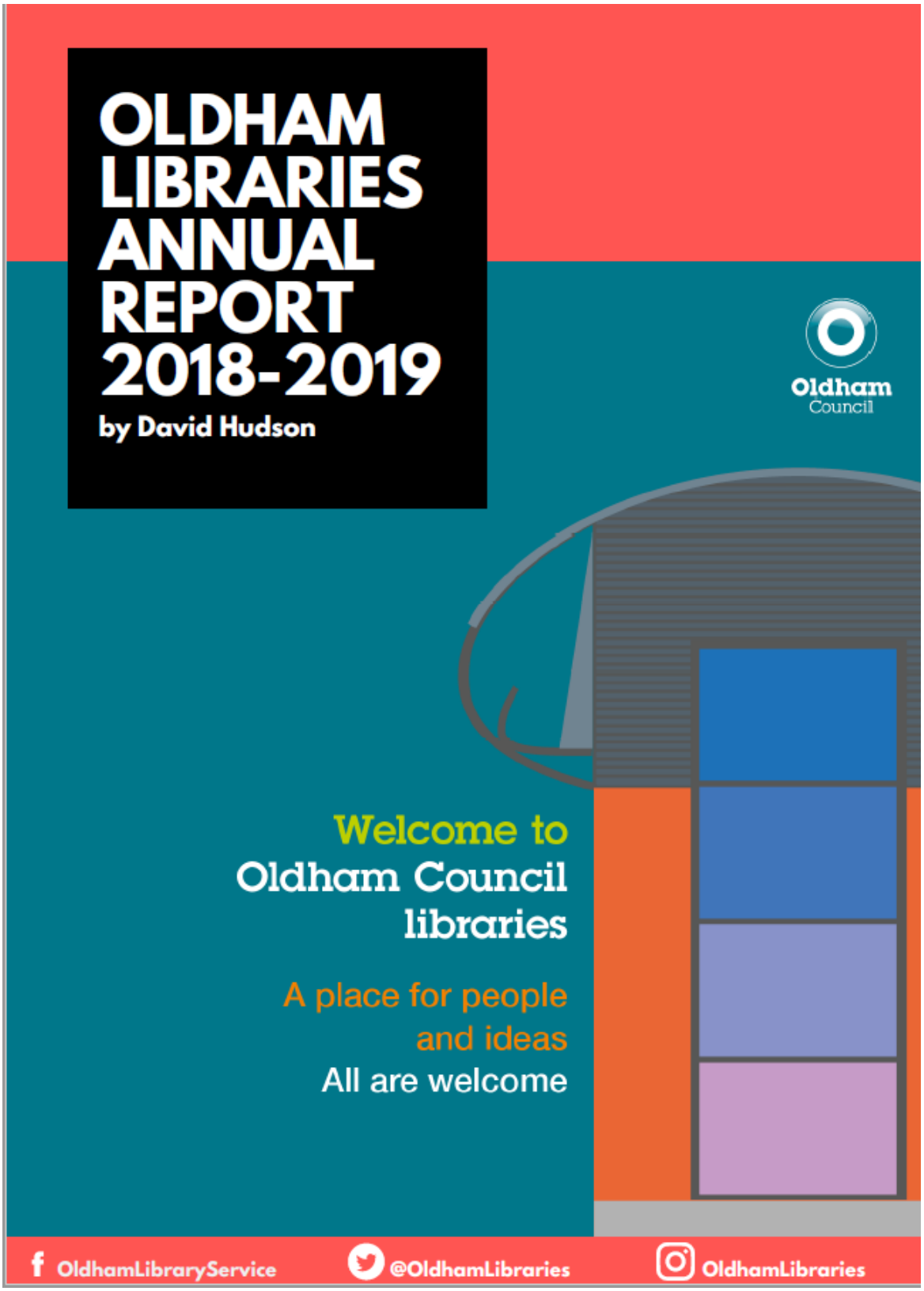
7 Consultation

7.1 n/a

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Annual Report 2018/19

Appendix A – Annual Report 2018/19



Free books

Free delivery

A place for people and ideas

All are welcome

Welcome to Oldham Council libraries

Free computers

FREE space

Free courses

Free events

Free Wi-Fi

470,469 Loans

That's the equivalent of 2 loans for every person in Oldham

1,275,559 Visits

Second busiest library service in Greater Manchester

38,286 active customers. Nearly a fifth of the population of Oldham.

128,828 Renewals

RESERVED

19,523 Reservations

26,249 Digital Issues including:

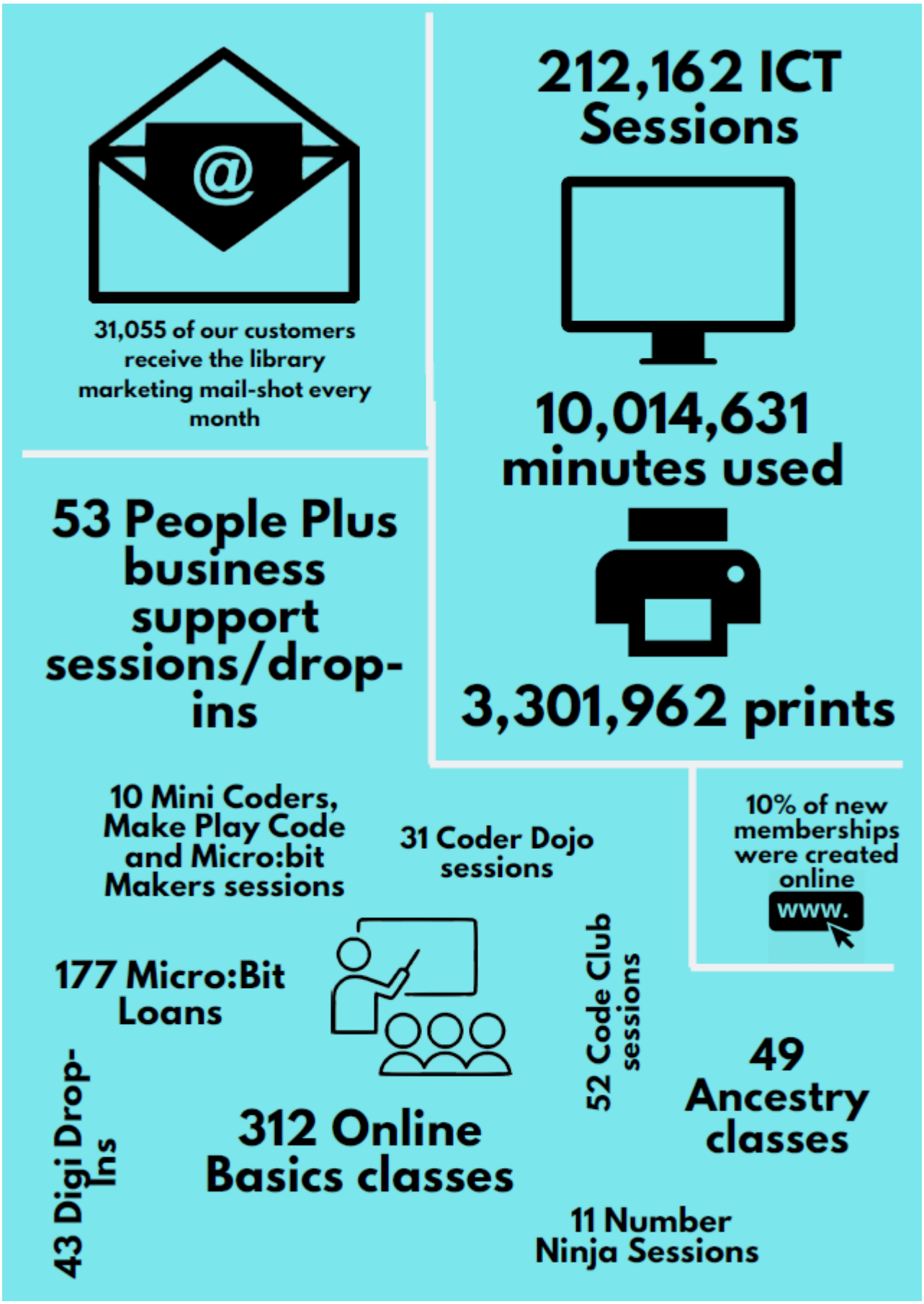
39,112 Virtual Visits

10,640 Digital Magazines

15,548 eBook & eAudio Loans

110% Increase in issues from previous year

81% of all items issued via self-service


31,055 of our customers receive the library marketing mail-shot every month
212,162 ICT Sessions
10,014,631 minutes used
3,301,962 prints
53 People Plus business support sessions/drop-ins
10 Mini Coders, Make Play Code and Micro:bit Makers sessions
31 Coder Dojo sessions
10% of new memberships were created online
www.
177 Micro:Bit Loans
52 Code Club sessions
49 Ancestry classes
43 Digi Drop-Ins
312 Online Basics classes
11 Number Ninja Sessions

Library Events

800+ attended Bookmark Festival

128 Live@thelibrary performances

Over 5000 attendees

Oldham Digifest

Over 30 different activities on offer

Health & Wellbeing

430 Health Events
Over 4,500 attendees

Summer Reading Challenge
2,450 Starters

1,330 Finishers

678 Baby & Toddler Sessions

11,534 participants

243 School visits with
6,982 pupils and teachers in attendance

The introduction of a brand new Sensory Room, the first of its kind for any library in the country!

45 Sessions booked so far!

180 volunteers

Contributing over 4,000 hours to the library

The Library Community

"I came to the libraries from the Get Oldham working scheme and was successful in gaining permananent employment with the library. It felt like a massive change, for the better, and helped bring me out of my shell as I felt reluctant to hold conversations with people. Now part of my role is to speak to customers on a daily basis which I love and I am very happy that I have chosen this line of work."

Terry Taylor, Library Assistant

"The Knit & Natter session has changed my life. I was on my own in the house week after week only going out for doctor & hospital appointments. One of the staff mentioned the session to me and asked if I would like to be a founder member. I have made lots of new friends and we also arrange to meet with each other for lunch, organise day trips together and parties as well! It has changed my life."

Julie, Founding Member of Royton Library's Knit and Natter Group

Reading Friends brings people together to read, share stories, meet new friends and have fun. In Oldham the project has made great progress over the past year and is reaching more than 400 participants. Oldham Libraries run groups for people with dementia and their carers as well as visiting care homes. Currently Oldham has 6 groups running. Since September 2018 Oldham Library Service expanded the programme to new areas of Greater Manchester.