Library community needs assessment for West Berkshire

January 2022

Contents

Executive Summary

1.1 The report presents a community needs assessment for the library service in West Berkshire. Its findings will be an input into the process of reviewing the council's library service.

Libraries in West Berkshire

1.2 There are eight physical libraries in West Berkshire. Four (Pangbourne, Mortimer, Burghfield Common and Theale) are located on the eastern side of the local authority area. Three are along the Kennet Valley (Thatcham, Newbury and Hungerford) and one serves Lambourn, in the north west of the area. In addition, there is a mobile library service with 81 stops, an "At Home" service and the ability to borrow electronic items through the council's e-library.

1.3 In common with many library services, use has declined in the last 15 - 20 years, although the number of library visits and issues of stock have been stable or increasing following a library review in 2017. The Covid-19 pandemic inevitably disrupted patterns of use, with periods of library closure and restricted services. Libraries adapted and there was a huge growth, of 87%, in the use of e-library resources between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Many events were put online and the service introduced a new order and collect service. It is likely that the pandemic has accelerated trends towards greater use of online resources.

Detailed assessment of needs

1.4 The national Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers set out the role libraries can play to "connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity". Recognising this role in supporting wider local action on social, economic and environmental wellbeing, the first part of the needs assessment has been structured around themes in the cross agency *West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Vision for 2036*.

Realising potential

1.5 West Berkshire is a generally prosperous area with high life expectancy, strong economic sectors and good employment. However, there are pockets of deprivation and numbers of people with needs that are easily masked by the general picture. This is manifested through wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment. It has a social mobility challenge, particularly for children. There are gaps in the employment market, particularly for those with a learning disability or mental health illness. A further aspect of need in West Berkshire relates to refugee populations where there is a growing cohort of Syrian and Afghan people.

1.6 This points to a key role for libraries in helping to engage harder to reach children, young people and their families and in providing information about the full range of education and training opportunities and making a wider range of foreign language material available.

Health and wellbeing

1.7 Overall population health in West Berkshire is good. On the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it ranks as one of the 20% least deprived districts in England for health. However, within this there are some important trends.

- West Berkshire has a population that is ageing at a faster rate than nationally, with forecast sharp growth in the over 75 population.

- The gap between its healthy and overall life expectancies is significant and there are gaps in life expectancies of around ten years between some wards.

- There are also high numbers of people with mental health problems. During the course of interviews with stakeholders for this assessment, a common theme was the extent of lower level mental health need and the requirement for emotional support.

- Reflecting the rural nature of the area, there are problems with low availability of public transport, of sparse access to public services and to cultural facilities. On the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), a majority of the population live in areas that are in the poorest scoring three deciles for "barriers to housing and services".

1.8   Health and wellbeing needs are therefore very important for libraries - libraries can help as they are sources of information, offer a place for social connection and safe public space.

Employment and economy

1.9   West Berkshire performs strongly on many local economic indicators. Its employment rate is 84% for people aged between 16 and 64 and is higher than the equivalent figure for the south east region and England. Many West Berkshire residents are highly skilled with the rate of education to NVQ4 level or above higher than the levels for the south east region and England. Nevertheless, there are clear employment and economic based needs:

- There is a particular challenge with underemployment - people working for fewer hours than they would like or carrying out work that does not make best use of their skills.

- 11 Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the three most deprived deciles nationally for education, training and skills – these are located around Newbury, Thatcham, Lambourn, Hungerford and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook wards.

- The pandemic had a particular impact on the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which employ 16% of local people, many of them young people, women or people from ethnic minorities.

- The pandemic also accelerated changes in patterns of work. A third of West Berkshire workers were able to work from home during the Covid-19 period and there is known to be a growing demand nationally for co-working space. The *Economic Development Strategy*, as refreshed in 2021, recognises the need to help start-ups and small businesses grow, including by providing incubator space and "one stop shop" advice.

1.10   This points to the role of libraries as a location for access to information about training, for delivery of training in smaller towns, and to be an environment that supports older and disadvantaged people looking to participate in the workforce. There are also implications for library space as a facility for workers otherwise based at home and for small and start up businesses.

Sustainability and quality of life

1.11 The *Health and Wellbeing Vision* includes a strong sustainability and quality of life agenda. This relates to more partnership working, increased links with cultural organisations and, as evidenced in the public survey, a desire to see libraries as places which have a strong cultural element including events, exhibitions, courses and classes. There is a role for libraries in holding information and hosting events and exhibitions to engage people in and promote sustainable choices.

Cross-cutting themes

1.12 This needs assessment highlights how the generally prosperous nature of West Berkshire masks some pockets of disadvantage and wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment and healthy life expectancy. The Covid-19 pandemic has further shone a light on needs in areas such as social isolation, including of carers and people with learning disabilities, and the number of people with secondary mental health needs. Drawing on this, we have identified four cross-cutting themes that are of particular relevance as changing needs that the library service can do more to support:

- Engagement. Our research has highlighted the difficultly of engaging hard to reach communities and the headline indicator of this is the large secondary education gap. There is an important role for libraries to support wider efforts to address this, through a focus on intergenerational learning and wider prevention work. Serving this need will require consideration of approaches to marketing and how to create staff time for engagement and community activities. Outreach requires resource to keep refreshing relationships with key partners such as schools. Discussions with staff for this needs assessment highlighted their view that they do not currently have the level of resourcing needed for this.

- Access to information and services. With a large rural area and increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion. For libraries this means building offers of assisted digital support, particularly to older people and vulnerable groups who lack the confidence to use self-service channels, or do not have access to suitable devices or reliable internet connection. Serving this need will also require more tailored support for public facing information technology equipment and creates a staff training need.

- Community resilience. Particularly in the context of an ageing population, there is a growing need for communities to identify and harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action. Libraries can support this by functioning as community hubs. This will need co-creation with communities and other public service organisations. It requires consideration of factors such as whether a library building can be open outside of library opening hours for wider community uses.

- Skills and employment. This is an area where the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the pattern of work, creating a need to provide space and facilities to support home workers, micro businesses and job seekers. More widely, there are the challenges of younger people's social mobility and the participation in the labour market for older and disadvantaged groups. These are factors that can be supported with changes to the configuration of physical library space and equipment and by encouraging support networks, with partners to use libraries.

Library locations

1.13 In addition to needs that affect the overall library offer, there are also changing needs that affect the nature of the library locations. West Berkshire's infrastructure development plan indicates concentrations of new housing will be built in the next few years around Thatcham, Newbury, in the east of the district and in parts of the downs area. This is in addition to the 10,000 new homes built between 2000 and 2018. The *Health and Wellbeing Vision 2036* recognises the importance of creating a sustainable housing mix, including a focus on increasing the amount of affordable housing and recognising the challenge of attracting and retaining young people. An additional aspect is extending provision of residential care bed spaces for the ageing population as well adaptations to help older people remain living at home.

1.14 This has important implications for libraries. While the overall population level of the district is set to be stable into the 2040s, existing patterns of population will change and they can expect to need to continue to adapt as these changes take place in the medium term. Space needs to be flexible. Points to consider reflecting the changing demography are:

- East. There are four libraries relatively close together with varied patterns of use. There is a need to explore the potential for partnership to create more community hub style facilities that can promote engagement with the community.

- Newbury and Thatcham. Masterplanning work in the town centres is an opportunity to tailor library provision better to local needs. In Newbury, there is an opportunity to extend the current facility in a way that would support the employment and skills agenda. In Thatcham, patterns of use indicate a need for more engagement in parts of its surrounding area. Staff report that the current facility is poorly located and its potential constrained by its small size – creating a new facility that can better engage people needs to be explored in the planning exercise.

- North. A large area of the north and centre of the district is not served by a local West Berkshire library and active library borrowers mainly travel to Newbury or Pangbourne. Modelling a potential catchment for a library in this area shows its level of need on most indices of deprivation is low. However, it is a rural area which ranks very poorly on access to housing and services. Through consultation with stakeholders, there is a case to explore linking some library provision with a wider community hub idea.

2   Introduction

Purpose of this report

2.1   The report presents a community needs assessment for the library service in West Berkshire. Its findings will be an input into the process of reviewing the council's library service.

2.2   Shared Intelligence has been commissioned to undertake the community needs assessment. The brief is to take a holistic approach to considering the needs of communities, including health, education and economic data as well as demographic information in relation to existing library locations. We have been asked to present a narrative that will enable the library service to:

- Assess how well the service meets the needs of residents - including any Covid-19 impacts on needs.

- Create options for:

  - A level of service that can better meet changing community needs with a similar amount of capacity and resource as at present.

  - A more ambitious vision for libraries requiring further capital investment to deliver increased engagement and positive, measurable outcomes for residents.

2.3   We should stress that this document is a needs assessment. It is out of scope to recommend how the service should meet the needs identified. However, our approach is that the assessment is informed by an awareness of how modern library services can serve a wide range of needs.

Approach to assessing community needs

2.4   In our experience, an effective needs assessment distinguishes between needs that local communities have (which library services can serve) and current patterns of use. Usage information provides a view of the accessibility of and demand for services currently on offer – but it does not on its own reveal insight about need for the various ways that libraries can support individuals and communities. Part of the brief for this work is to provide insight into the needs of the significant part of the population that does not use library services, but may stand to benefit from them.

Method

2.5   The needs assessment has been produced from three principal areas of activity:

Document review

2.6   We have carried out a literature review to understand the council's and wider local partnership strategies and associated evidence bases. References to source material are given throughout this document.

Data analysis

2.7   We have analysed several sets of data. This includes:

- Library use data, provided by the library service. This covers:
    - Borrower patterns.
    - Visitor data.
    - Data about active borrowers, their post code locations and ages.
- Index of Multiple Deprivation data.
- Information from West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment documents.

Interviews

2.8 We have undertaken interviews with senior officers in the council, at Service Director and Head of Service level and with representatives of four voluntary and community sector organisations who work with client groups with needs that may be supported by libraries. At the end of the interview process, we also carried out a workshop with senior library service staff. This served as a sensemaking session, to ensure the insights were informed by frontline experience.

Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on data continuity

2.9 This needs assessment was undertaken in autumn 2021, 18 months following the start of restrictions brought into address the Covid-19 pandemic. For a large part of that 18-month period libraries were either closed, or open with restrictions created by social distancing requirements. Some restrictions and behaviour changes persist at the time of writing. This has had an effect on continuity of data. For most data analysis, we have used 2019/20 as the most recent year of consistent data.

3 Overview of West Berkshire

3.1 West Berkshire is a small unitary local authority with a population of 158,465[1]. The district's principal towns are Newbury and Thatcham, which together have a population of 69,667. Additionally, 31,444 people live in the suburban area in the east of the district which adjoins the Reading borough. 57,354 are classed as living in the rural part of the district. This includes market towns such as Hungerford and Lambourn as well as small towns and villages. Overall, nearly 75 per cent of the district sits within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

3.2 The census in 2011 found that 94.8% of the population were white, including 4.4% white non British or Northern Irish. 2.5% were Asian or Asian British, 0.9% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; 1.6% from mixed/multiple ethnic groups; and 0.2% from other ethnic groups. Using the same data, only two wards, Tilehurst South and Holybrook (87.4%) and Tilehurst Birch Copse (91.3%) had a percentage of white population less than 92%.

Population trends

3.3 West Berkshire's population is forecast to be stable in the medium term. 2030 and 2043 estimates show a level very similar to the present population[2]. However, there are dynamics within the population that indicate that there are likely to be changing needs and trends that will develop over next 20 years. These are:

- Ageing population and the balance of retired to working age people. In common with many areas, West Berkshire's population is projected to grow older. While this is a national trend, it is set to grow at a faster rate than nationally. Key data are shown in the table below:

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[1] This is based on the mid year 2020 estimates from the Office of National Statistics, quoted on the council's website. Town and settlement populations are taken from the same source.
[2] Office of National Statistics projections from NOMIS (downloaded on 5 November 2021). The projection for 2030 is 157,677 and 2043 is 157,643.

		West Berkshire	England
Percentage aged 65+			
	2021	20%	19%
	2030	25%	21%
	2043	28%	24%
Percentage aged 75+			
	2021	9%	9%
	2030	12%	11%
	2043	16%	13%
Percentage working age (18 to 65)			
	2021	58%	60%
	2030	55%	58%
	2043	52%	57%
Ratio working age: retired age*			
	2021	1 : 2.9	1 : 3.2
	2030	1 : 2.2	1 : 2.7
	2043	1 : 1.8	1 : 2.4
* NB figures do not take account of the fact that the retirement age will reach 67 by 2028.			

Two points are important to note:

- o The growth in the over 75 population who often have the highest needs and are most vulnerable to isolation.

- o The drop in the ratio of the retired to working age population.

- Location of new housing. The council's Emerging Draft Infrastructure Development Plan3 identifies describes how the Local Plan Review anticipates future residential and mixed-use development in three areas. These focus on Newbury and Thatcham (around 4,500 units, of which 2,500 in north east Thatcham); the eastern area (around 800 units) and the North Wessex Downs (around 300 units). This needs to be seen in the context of a forecast stable population and the fact that 10,000 new homes were built between 2000 and 2018[4].

Context for libraries

A need to consider the important role libraries play in helping older adults remain active and independent and in offering groups and services that help to support carers.

A case for reviewing library service point distribution, to ensure it adequately reflects areas of increasing concentrations of housing.

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[3] *Emerging Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan*, West Berkshire Council, July 2021.
[4] *West Berkshire Vision 2036*, West Berkshire Health and Wellbeing Board.

Prosperity, Index of Multiple Deprivation and rurality

3.4   West Berkshire is a generally prosperous area with high life expectancy, strong economic sectors and good employment, particularly in the technology sector and good connections through the Thames Valley corridor.

3.5   Using the government's Index of Multiple Deprivation[5], it is ranked 289 out of 317 English single tier and district councils in terms of deprivation. This means it is generally one of the least deprived areas in the country, on a range of data sets measured in small geographic areas (Local Super Output Areas, or LSOAs). 26% of its 97 LSOAs are in the 10 per cent least deprived.

3.6   However, there are pockets of deprivation and numbers of people with needs (such as mental health) that are easily masked by the general picture. There are two LSOAs in the most deprived three deciles nationally, located in the Newbury Greenham and Thatcham North East wards.
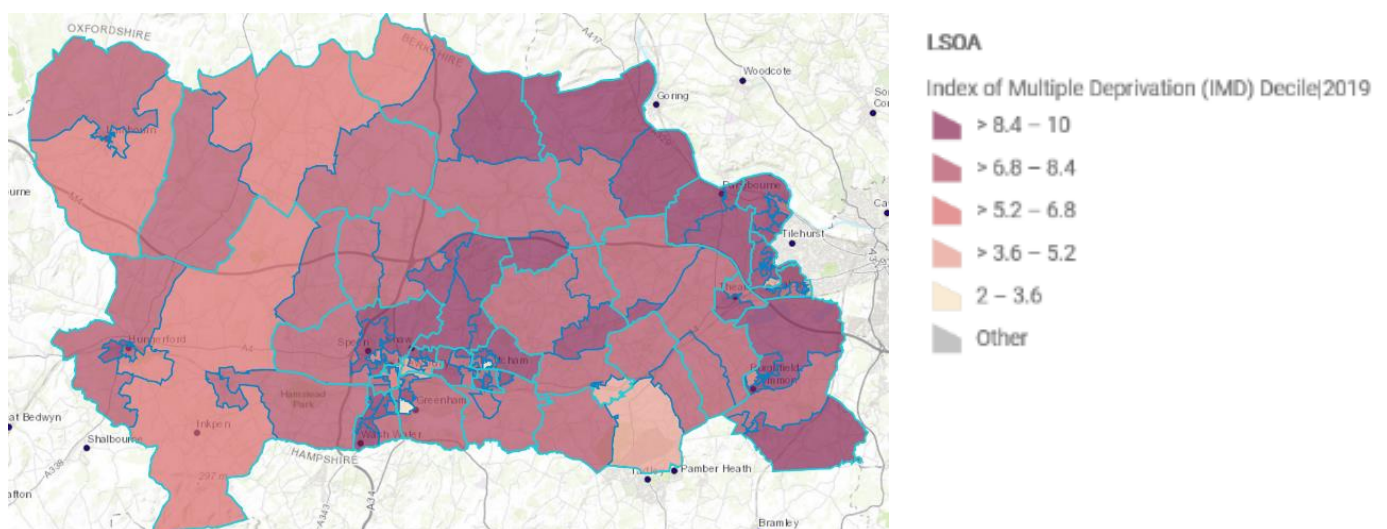

Figure 1: overall 2019 IMD decile distribution by LSOA (lower number and paler colour indicates higher deprivation)

3.7   The IMD contains a "domain" for "barriers to housing and services". This represents an area where the majority of the district's population are in the most deprived three deciles. This domain measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. It includes geographical barriers, relating to the physical proximity of local services, and wider barriers, including access to and affordability of housing.

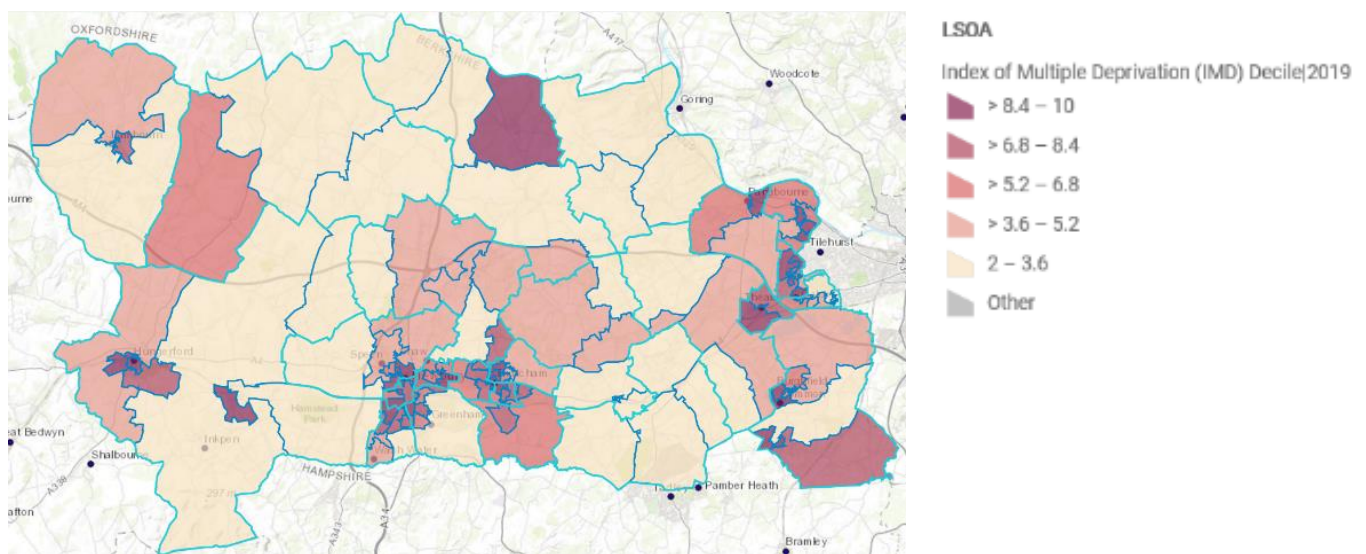[5] *Index of Multiple Deprivation*, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019

Figure 2: IMD 2019 - domain for barriers to housing and services

3.8   The level of barriers to housing and services reflects the rural nature of the area. Many of those living in the rural part of West Berkshire are in an area with a low density of population and challenges including low availability of public transport of sparse access to public services or the cultural facilities available in a major centre such as Newbury. On housing, the House Price Index for November 2019 indicated the average house price for first time buyers in England was £251,222 compared to £276,521 in West Berkshire[6].

3.9   We discuss in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.5 the significant secondary education attainment gap and young people's social mobility challenge in the area. This indicates that there are sections of the population who are hard to reach. In an area that is generally prosperous and with a vibrant technology sector, there is a problem with digital inclusion. While many people are very comfortable with finding information digitally and can afford devices and fast connections, a significant minority risk being left behind whether because of their age, ability to afford a suitable device, or not having the skills needed by employers.

Context for libraries

A need to consider whether and how effectively libraries engage harder to reach groups.

The role of libraries in providing a route to access information and services, in a rural context and for those who either do not have, or are not comfortable with digital access.

Budget and preventative services

3.10   In common with many local authorities, budget pressures have led to reductions in discretionary and preventative aspects of services. The libraries budget and staffing reduced in 2017 by 44%. Children's centres have reduced to three family hubs and direct youth provision has very substantially reduced.

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[6] UK House price index - Land registry.

Context for libraries

Previous reductions in services are an important context factor for assessing community needs and how libraries may respond to them.

Covid-19

3.11   The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on isolation and also precipitated change in patterns of town centre use. By pushing so much activity online, including social connection, it has brought the issue of digital exclusion into focus.

Context for libraries

It is difficult to assess the long-term Covid-19 impact at this stage, but it sets an important context for the role of libraries in recovery and prevention.

4   Libraries in West Berkshire

4.1   There are eight physical libraries in West Berkshire. Four (Pangbourne, Mortimer, Burghfield Common and Theale) are located on the eastern side of the local authority area. Three are along the Kennet Valley (Thatcham, Newbury and Hungerford) and one serves Lambourn, in the north west of the area. In addition, there is a mobile library service with 81 stops, an "At Home" Service and the ability to borrow electronic items through the council's e-library.

4.2   Libraries offer a range of services. In addition to the core access to books for borrowing and reference, the service provides:

- Free access to wifi and computers.

- Self-service printing, photocopying and scanning.

- Talks on popular topics such as local history and the environment, including online versions of these since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Room hire.

- Free access to e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

- Local and family history resources.

- Audiobooks and e-audiobooks.

- Services for children including Storytime, Rhymetime, Code Club, craft events and other occasional events, many of which were delivered online during the pandemic.

- Book groups: titles available in book group sets of 10 copies (for an annual fee) and an online group set up at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Online access to reference resources, including access to academic and research journals and Britannica Online and GoCitizen, an online resource for candidates preparing for the Life in the UK test (British citizenship).

4.3   In common with many library services, use has declined in the last 15 - 20 years, although the number of library visits and issues of stock has been stable or increasing following the library review in 2017. Some trends are shown in the graphs below. One of these refers to the number of "active borrowers". An active borrower has borrowed at least one item of physical stock in the preceding 12 months. It excludes anyone who has only borrowed from the council's e-library.
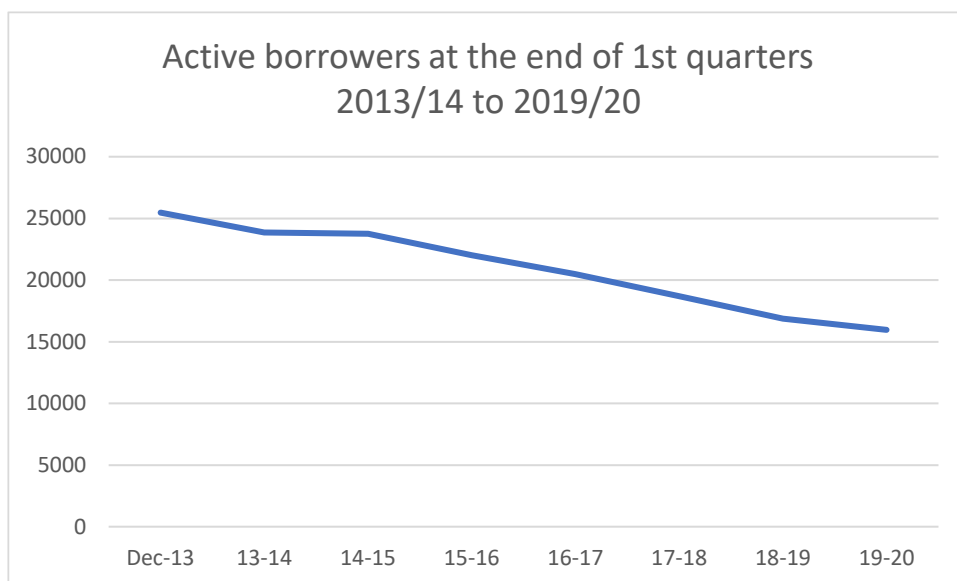
Figure 3: number of active borrowers measured at the end of the first quarter
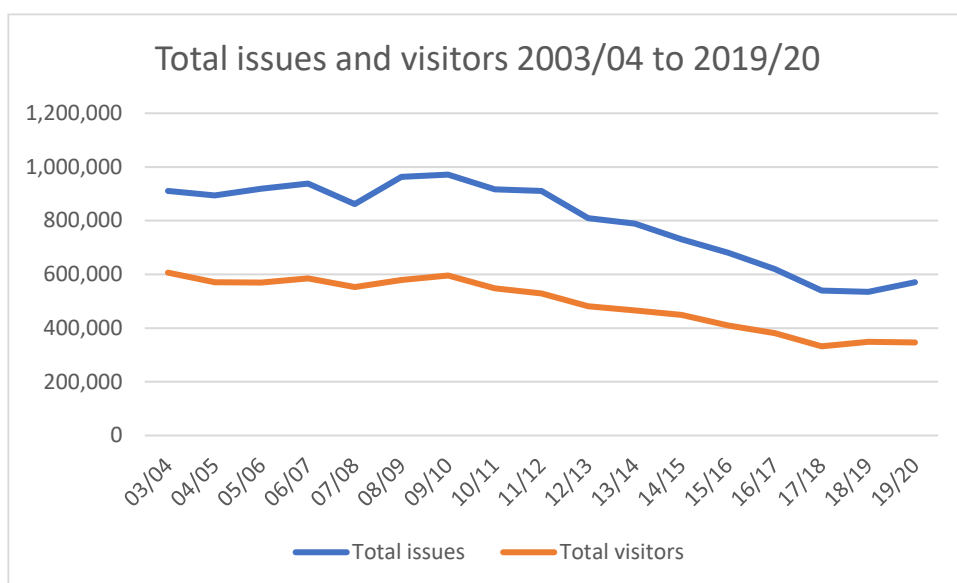

Figure 4: total number of stock issues and visits recorded by financial year. Note that this total stock issues figure includes e-library downloads as well as all online renewals.

4.4   The chart below is taken from CIPFA data and shows West Berkshire's relative position compared with other English authorities for the level of library visits per capita. Over the period 2010/11 to 2019/20, West Berkshire has shown an average level of decline. Only four authorities have seen growth in visits.
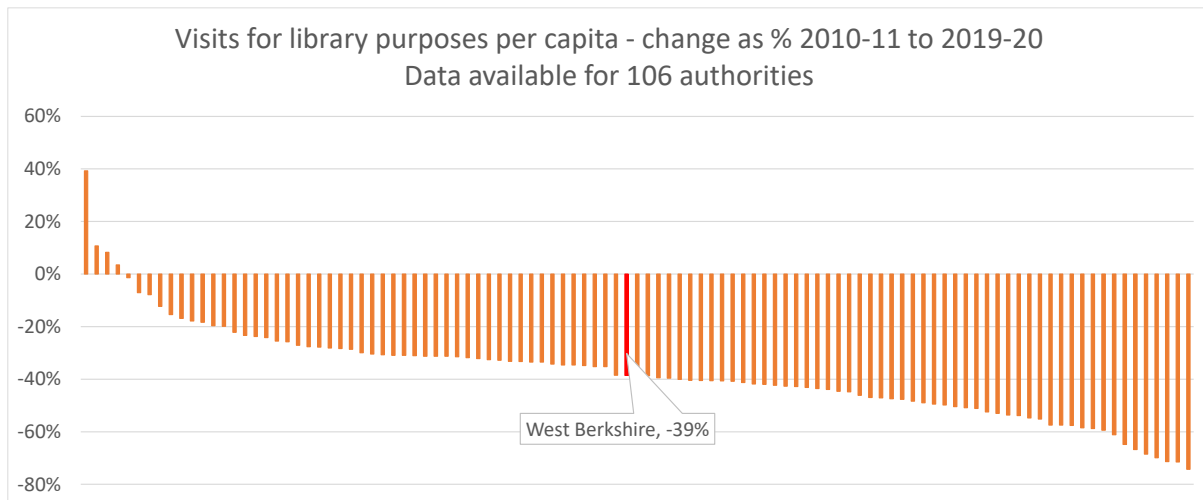
Figure 5: change in visits for library purposes per capita for 106 local authorities

4.5   A second chart shows the number of active library users per capita over the same period. West Berkshire has fared better than the majority, but its level of decline is still significant. Only five authorities have achieved growth.
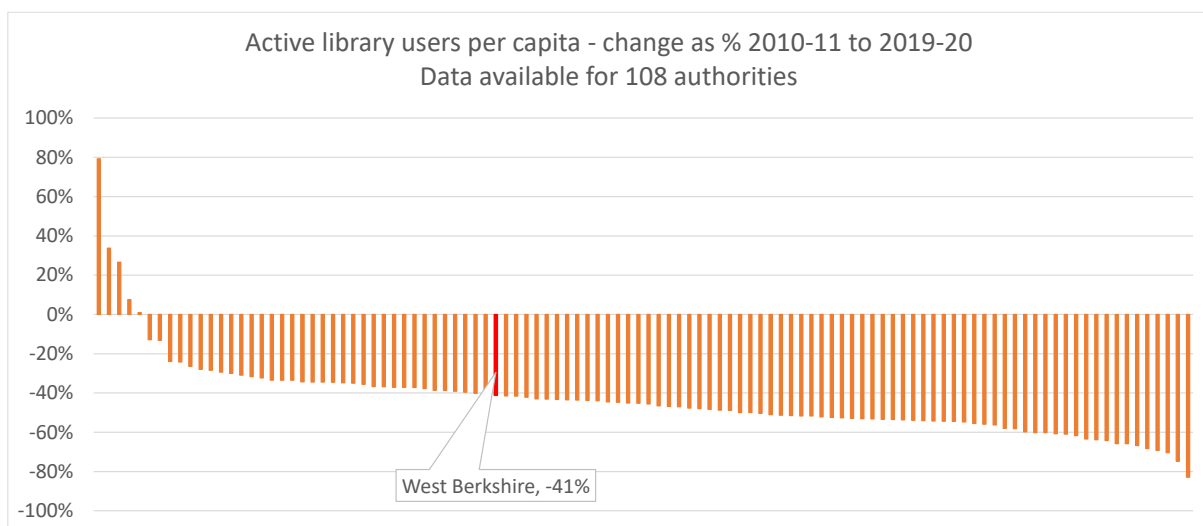

Figure 6: change in active library users per capital for 108 local authorities

4.6   Other characteristics and trends in West Berkshire library use are described below.

Age profile of West Berkshire libraries

4.7   Based on 2019/20 data for active borrowers, the age breakdown between junior and adult borrowers shows that children aged 10 or under are the proportionately largest group compared with the population of their age group. This dataset covers all borrowers using West Berkshire libraries, so covers some who do not live in the district. In the library profiles section, in Appendix I, we present some analysis based on borrowers with West Berkshire post codes. However, this is difficult to show on a whole authority level without double counting of the borrowers who use more than one library.
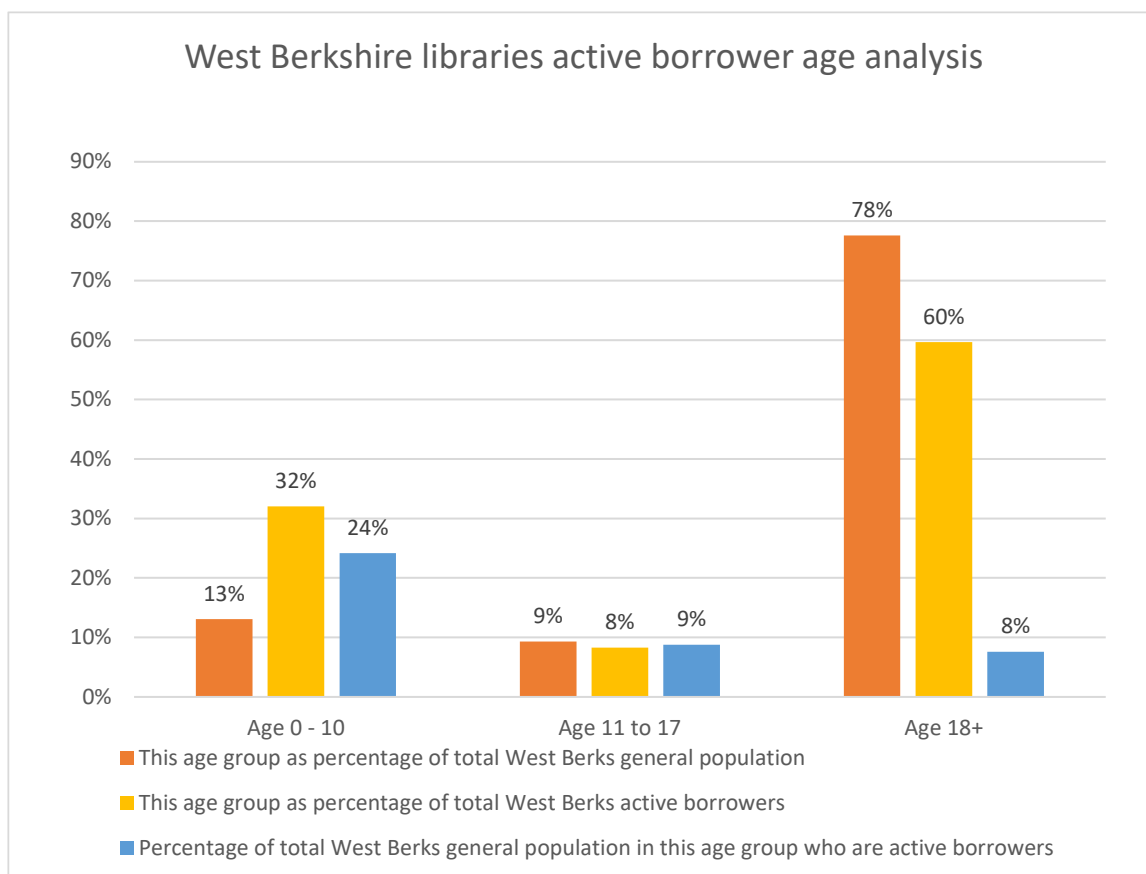
West Berkshire libraries active borrower age analysis

Figure 7: age analysis of active borrowers (including non West Berkshire post code borrowers)

Ethnic profile of library users

4.8   The library service no longer collects ethnicity information about its borrowers – this was discontinued in 2018 because of concerns about compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For this reason, we have not attempted an ethnic profile of library users. Some analysis on a per library basis was included in the 2016 needs assessment[7] based on the previously held data. This found the ethnic breakdown for each library was roughly similar to the areas they serve, with some variation around how well the "white other" group was represented. The analysis noted a much higher proportion of white other users using the then two mobile libraries than any static library. It is important to note, however, that these data were optional for customers to provide so do not present a comprehensive picture.

Use of electronic resources

4.9   The chart below shows the steady growth in downloading of electronic resources, such as eBooks.

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[7] *West Berkshire Libraries Needs Assessment*, RedQuadrant, September 2016.
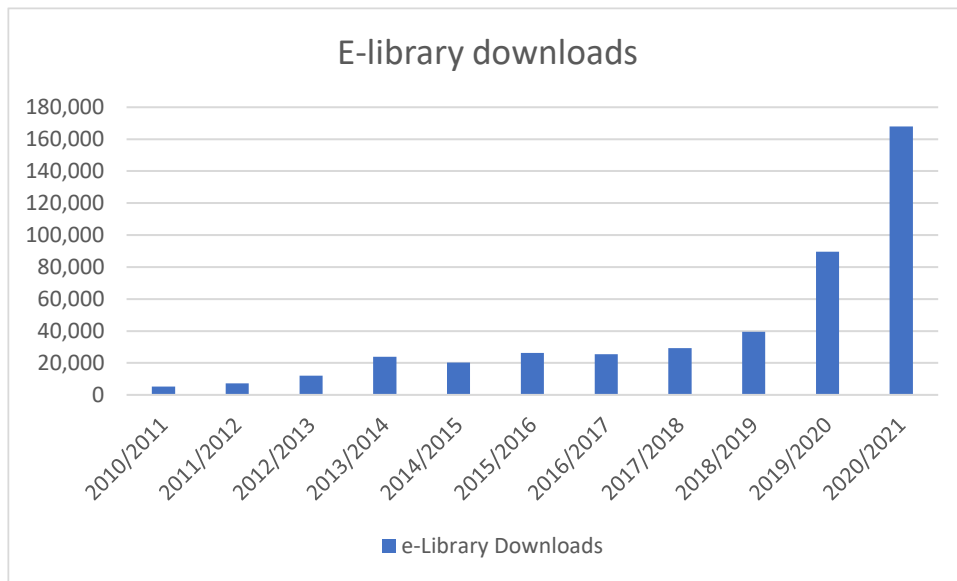
Figure 8: trend in e-library downloads

4.10 The upward trend was established before the Covid-19 pandemic, and then spiked during it.

4.11 The library service has recently introduced a libraries mobile phone app. This enables users to search the library catalogue and to renew and reserve books. It also provides access to the collection of free e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines and e-newspapers.

Use of computers in libraries

4.12 The libraries provide wifi, some printing facilities, scanning and access to public computers. This is an important component of the total number of library visits. There has, however, been a decline in the use of public computers since 2015/16, as can be seen in the graphs below. There is now an increasing trend for customers to use their own mobile devices to work on, using the library wifi. The number of public computers available has therefore been reduced and they have been replaced with more study tables with USB charging points to meet demand.
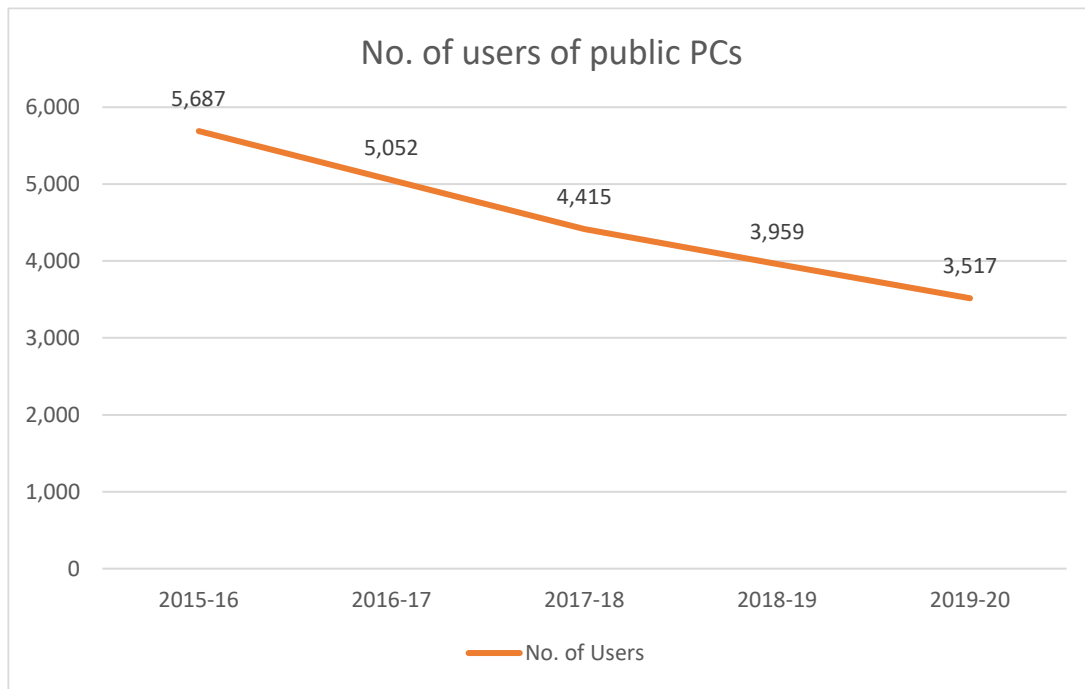
Figure 9: trend in number of users of public computers in libraries
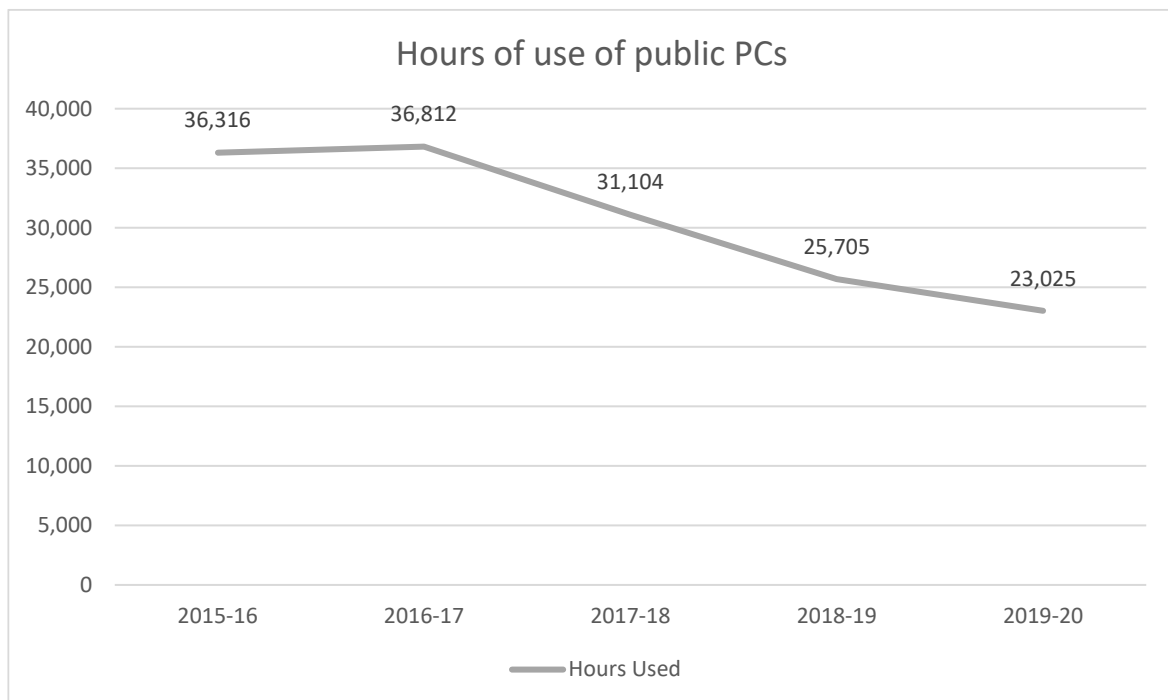
Figure 10: trend in total hours of use of public PCs

Mobile library and "At Home" service

4.13 There is one mobile library service (reduced from two in 2017/18). Use of the mobile service has declined sharply in the last decade, although the trend has been more stable since the consolidation to one service. The chart below shows the number of visits to the mobile service:
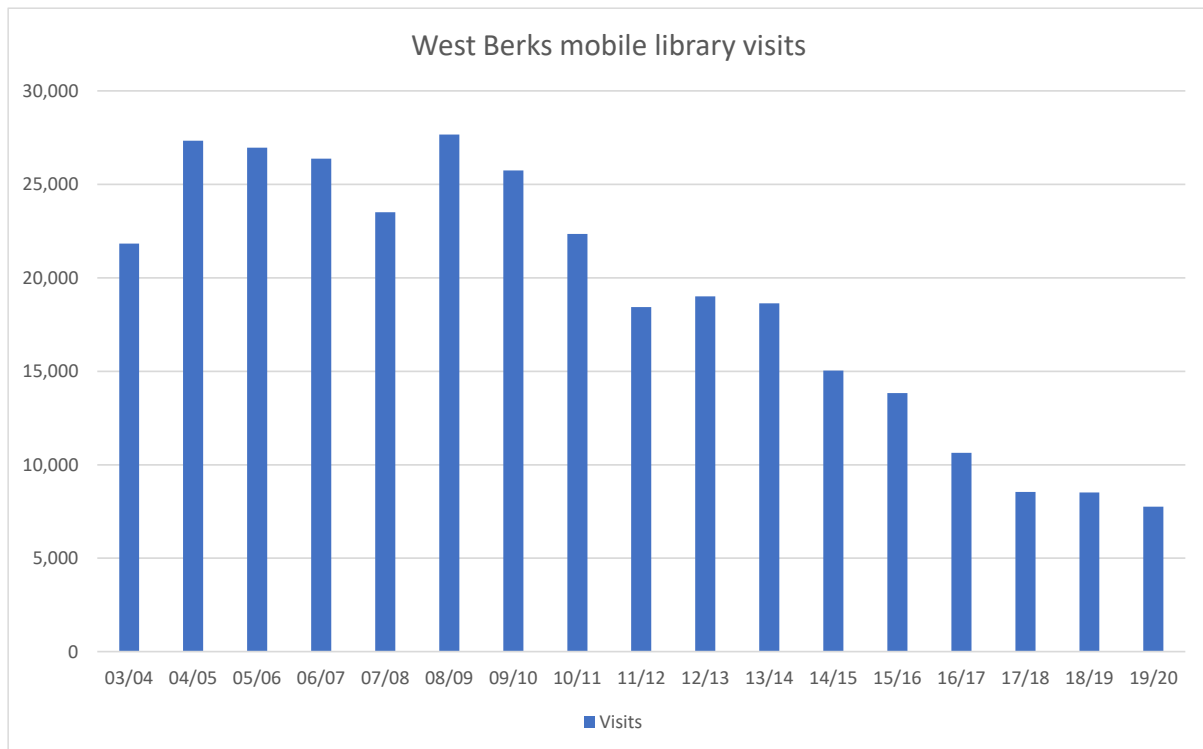
Figure 11: trend in number of visits to West Berkshire mobile libraries

4.14   While this is a smaller number of visits than that for any static library, its percentage of issues is the same (at 4%) as the libraries at Burghfield Common, Pangbourne and Theale.

4.15   An "At Home" service has operated since the late 2000s. This had 127 active borrowers in 2019/20. It is targeted at readers who find it difficult to visit their local library because of age or disability and is delivered by volunteers. The chart below includes the 2020/21 figure as the "At Home" service was important during the pandemic. The drop in visits reflects the government restriction that applied to the use of elderly volunteers which meant that the service did not operate during the first few months of the first national lockdown, resuming in May 2020.
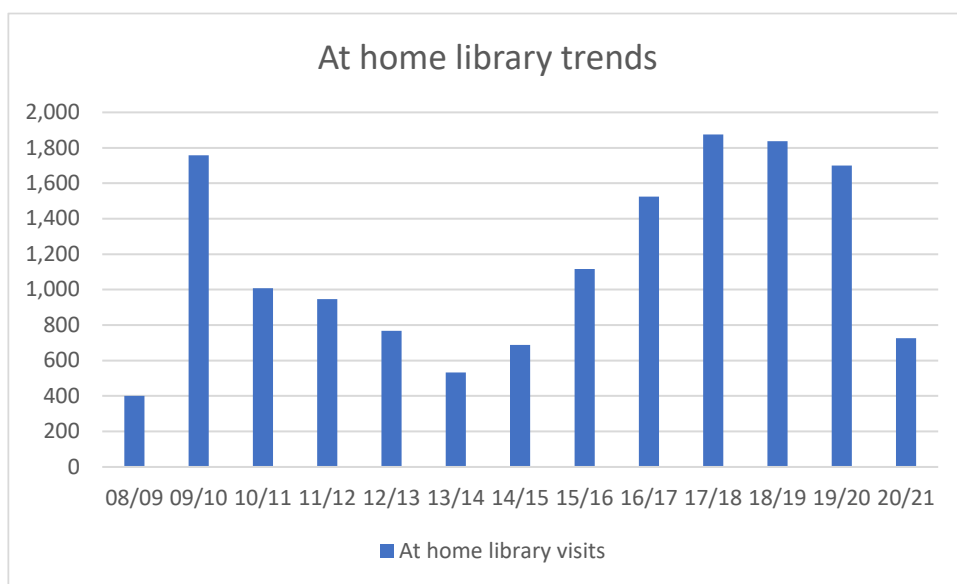
Covid-19 pandemic implications

4.16   The Covid-19 pandemic inevitably disrupted these patterns, with periods of library closure and restricted services. We have removed 2020/21 from most of the charts shown in this section as including it would give a misleading impression of trends as visits and borrower numbers were greatly reduced. As libraries adapted, there was a huge growth, of 87%, in the use of e-library resources between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Many events were put online and the service introduced a new order and collect service. It is likely that the pandemic has accelerated trends towards greater use of online resources. It is worth noting, however, that in the first four months of the 2021/22 financial year, over 1,900 new borrowers have been recruited, the highest for the equivalent period since 2015.

5 Detailed assessment of needs

Needs

5.1 This section aims to present a range of socio-economic data and analysis about West Berkshire which is relevant to a set of needs that libraries can help to support. In selecting the data for the purposes of a library needs assessment, our thinking has been influenced by the input of interviewees and also the Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers[8]. These set out the role libraries can aim to play to "connect communities, improve wellbeing and promote equality through learning, literacy and cultural activity".

5.2 The sections below have been structured under the five "hopes for the future" presented in the *West Berkshire Vision 2036*. This presents a vision for inclusive growth and a focus on sustainable achievement of outcomes for all of the people of West Berkshire. The hopes for the future are:

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where everybody has what they need to fulfil their potential.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire where the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and backgrounds is good.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone.

- We will have delivered a West Berkshire with beautiful, historic and diverse landscapes and a strong cultural offering.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire where everybody has what they need to fulfil their potential"

5.3 The focus of this theme is creating the conditions to ensure that everyone living in West Berkshire has the best possible start in life and has the opportunity to thrive. An important context factor for this is social mobility which has been area of weakness for West Berkshire for some time. The Social Mobility Commission's *State of the Nation 2017* report includes the concept of social mobility "cold spots" for the areas that perform worst on 16 areas of indictor, covering early years, schools, youth and working lives factors. It identifies West Berkshire as the 60th worst cold spot out of 324 local authority district areas in England[9].

Children and young people

5.4 On early years specifically, West Berkshire is the eighth worst "cold spot" area in England for social mobility. This reflects Ofsted ratings for nursery providers and also the district's relatively low

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[8] https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/universal-library-offers (Accessed 16/11/2021)

[9] *State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain*, Social Mobility Commission, November 2017

percentage of children eligible for free school meals who achieve a "good level of development" at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage[10]. This is shown in more detail in the Public Health outcomes framework data, which uses data from 2018/19.

Indicator	West Berkshire	South East	England
Children achieving a good level of development at the age of reception	74.6%	74.6%	71.8%
Children with free school meal status achieving a good level of development at the end of Reception	41.4%	55.4%	56.5%
Children achieving expected level in the phonics screening check year 1	81.8%	82.2%	81.8%
Children with free school meals status achieving the expected level in the phonics screening check in Year 1	57.0%	66.1%	70.1%

5.5 During the course of education, the attainment gap between the most and least well performing students is significant in West Berkshire. Data reported in 2017 shows that the difference begins at 3.1 months for early years (a relatively low gap) but rises to 25 months at secondary level, which is the tenth largest of English education authorities. The Health and Wellbeing Vision makes it clear that an important ambition for the area is that all its young people should be well-educated irrespective of the wealth of their parents.

5.6 This is also reflected in the economic development strategy which aims to promote a wide range of education and training opportunities, including T Levels and apprenticeships, to widen access.

Adults

5.7 The social mobility position for "working lives" is much stronger. West Berkshire is the 16th most socially mobile area, reflecting indicators to do with salary, house prices, occupation types and home ownership. Where the area performs less well is with gaps in its employment market. There are particular issues with employment of disadvantaged groups. The Public Health Outcomes Framework gave West Berkshire a "red" indicator for those with a learning disability in employment and "amber" for those with a mental health illness.

5.8 An important ambition for West Berkshire is that the workforce has the skills it needs and that anyone, regardless of their age, health or ability is given a chance to participate in the workplace. In interviews with stakeholders, we heard the view of the importance of intergenerational learning to tackle social mobility – encouraging parents to read with their children and the key role that libraries can play in encouraging this. This is discussed further in paragraphs 5.38 to 5.44 under *engagement*.

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[10] Since 2014 free school meals have been universally available for children in reception, year 1 and year 2. The indicator reflects the requirement for parents to tell schools if they receive any of the qualifying benefits, which are used to trigger claims under the pupil premium scheme.

5.9 A further aspect of need in West Berkshire relates to refugee populations. There is growing cohort of Syrian and Afghan refugees for whom libraries can provide safe space, an opportunity to socialise or to obtain information.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- Activities and resources which support increased school readiness for pre-school children and their parents.

- Opportunities to strengthen reading (for pleasure and for study) and other attainment among school-age children.

- Activities to support family learning.

- Opportunities to access resources and support outside of regular school and work hours (e.g. weekends and evenings).

- Provision of information about the full range of education and training opportunities.

- Range of foreign language material available.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire where the health and wellbeing of residents of all ages and backgrounds is good"

5.10 Overall population health in West Berkshire is good. On the Index of Multiple Deprivation, it ranks as one of the 20% least deprived districts in England for health. This is reflected in a higher than average life expectancy for men and women. It also ranks above the regional and national averages in other wider determinant of health indicators, such as the percentage of children in low income families and the percentage of people in employment.

5.11 Healthy life expectancy is higher than the England average. However, at 66.3 years for women (compared with a life expectancy of 85.2) and 68.2 for men (compared with a life expectancy of 81.9) it is clear that the extra life expectancy of people in West Berkshire is not necessarily one of healthy years.

5.12 There are also health inequalities. Life expectancy is 4.4 years lower for men and 5.2 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of West Berkshire than in the least deprived areas. The 2017 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on life expectancy and mortality highlights that there were gaps in life expectancies of around ten years between some wards[11]. The JSNA also highlights how multiple factors affect mortality including access to services, income levels and rurality and the Health and Wellbeing Vision identifies a number of actions which will help more people to live well for longer, including helping communities to support their residents and empowering individuals to take more responsibility or their health.

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[11] West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Living Well: Life Expectancy and Mortality, 2017. The document uses ward boundaries that have been changed by a 2018 Local Government Boundary Commission report. In 2017, the largest gaps were:
- For males, between Victoria (75.3) years and Bucklebury (85.2 years).
- For females, between Thatcham North (80.6 years) and Birch Copse (90.2 years).

5.13   While health deprivation is relatively low, there are still significant numbers of people with needs. A key example is mental health. The JSNA on adult mental health was published in 2016. This cites a predicted instance of adults aged 18 to 64 with a common mental disorder of 15,077 and projected it as stable to 2030. Other indicators also illustrate the extent of mental health problems, including:

- Amber indicators on rate of emergency hospital admission for intentional self-harm (all ages) and hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in young people (aged 15-24 years).

- A red indicator on adults in contact with secondary mental health services who live in stable and appropriate accommodation[12].

- A sharpening of mental health issues from the pandemic. The council's *Recovery and Renewal Strategy*[13] describes clear evidence of increased referrals both for adults and children and young people.

5.14   During the course of interviews with stakeholders for this assessment, a common theme was the extent of lower level mental health need and the requirement for emotional support. Many of those in need are people who are not in touch with, or would not meet the criteria for statutory mental health support. This is an area where libraries can help as they offer a place for social connection or quiet time.

Social isolation and health and wellbeing

5.15   The Health and Wellbeing Vision 2036 highlights a growing concern about social isolation, particularly rural isolation, and its adverse impact on personal wellbeing. It contains an aspiration to ensure that all residents are given the opportunity to participate in their communities and can access the services they need. This is important for people of all ages, but the impact is particularly noted for young people and older adults.

5.16   Formal indicators do not make West Berkshire a particularly striking area nationally for social isolation or loneliness, but the numbers of people involved are still significant and constitute a local need:

- On the Public Health Outcomes Framework, 16.9 per cent of people over the age of 16 report that they feel lonely often / always or some of the time. This is lower than the regional and national average.

- West Berkshire has amber indicators for the percentage of adult social care users, and carers, who feel they have enough social interaction. This has been measured for the age groups over 18 and over 65. The rates are similar to the English average, but slightly worse for adult carers aged 18+.

5.17   During the course of interviews, we have heard how isolation particularly affects those who do not have access to private transport, in rural areas. In addition to teenagers and older people, this is a

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[12] [Public Health Outcomes Framework at a glance summary](#), (2019/20 data).

[13] *Recovery & Renewal Strategy*, West Berkshire Council, May 2021

factor for young people employed in low paid but distinctive jobs in the horse-racing industry in the north west of the district.

5.18   There are around 750[14] people aged 14 or over on learning disability registers for West Berkshire. The gap in the employment rate between those with a learning disability and the overall employment rate is rated as red in the Public Health Outcomes and is 77.8%, compared with a national figure of 70.6%. This is a group where individuals often benefit from help in connecting to the internet and making job applications, but can feel uncomfortable in settings such as Job Centre Plus.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- The role of libraries as a place for social connection or offering quiet space to people experiencing mental health problems.

- A hub for information about staying healthy.

- Providing a location for social interaction, whether through events or being a location for groups to meet.

- Providing a comfortable and welcoming setting for people with learning disabilities who may need help with internet access or linking to the jobs market.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire that welcomes business, enterprise and industry into a productive, growing and dynamic local economy"

5.19   West Berkshire performs strongly on many local economic indicators. Its employment rate is 84% for people aged between 16 and 64 and is higher than the equivalent figure for the south east region and for England. A large percentage (59%) of employment is in senior managerial, professional or associate professional or technical roles. This is also higher than the regional and English average, as are average wage levels. The dominant industry by far for Gross Value Added is information and communication, which accounts for 29% of the total district amount[15].

5.20   The council's *Economic Development Strategy*, published in 2020 set out the need to move away from previous approaches which had centred on sustaining the conditions for prosperity. It stresses the need to tailor the strategy to deal with several challenges. These include some of those identified already in this document – ageing population, social mobility and participation in the labour market of older and disadvantaged backgrounds and those with mental health issues or learning difficulties to be given more opportunity to participate in the workplace.

5.21   It also highlights the additional challenge of underemployment. This manifests itself as people working for fewer hours than they would like or carrying out work that does not make best use of their skills. This reflects research from the Learning and Work Institute's Youth Opportunity Index,

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[14] The NHS figure in October 2021 was 733.
[15] All figures accessed via the economy and employment section of the Berkshire Observatory (accessed in November 2021).

published in late 2018[16]. West Berkshire ranks first out of 150 local authorities for the employment rate of 23 to 28 year olds, but 142nd for net underemployment.

5.22   Generally, West Berkshire residents have good skills levels with 49.3% educated to NVQ4 or above (meaning some form of Higher Education) compared to 45.1% across the South East region and 43.1% for England. The district compares similarly favourably for NVQ levels 3, 2 and 1. The percentage with no qualification is low at 2.6%, compared with 4.8 at regional level and 6.4% in England[17]. This is reflected in the education and skills domain of the IMD, where 44 out of 97 LSOAs are in the three least deprived deciles nationally. However, 11 LSOAs are in the three most deprived deciles nationally. These are the paler areas on the map below, and are located around Newbury, Thatcham, Lambourn, Hungerford and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook wards.
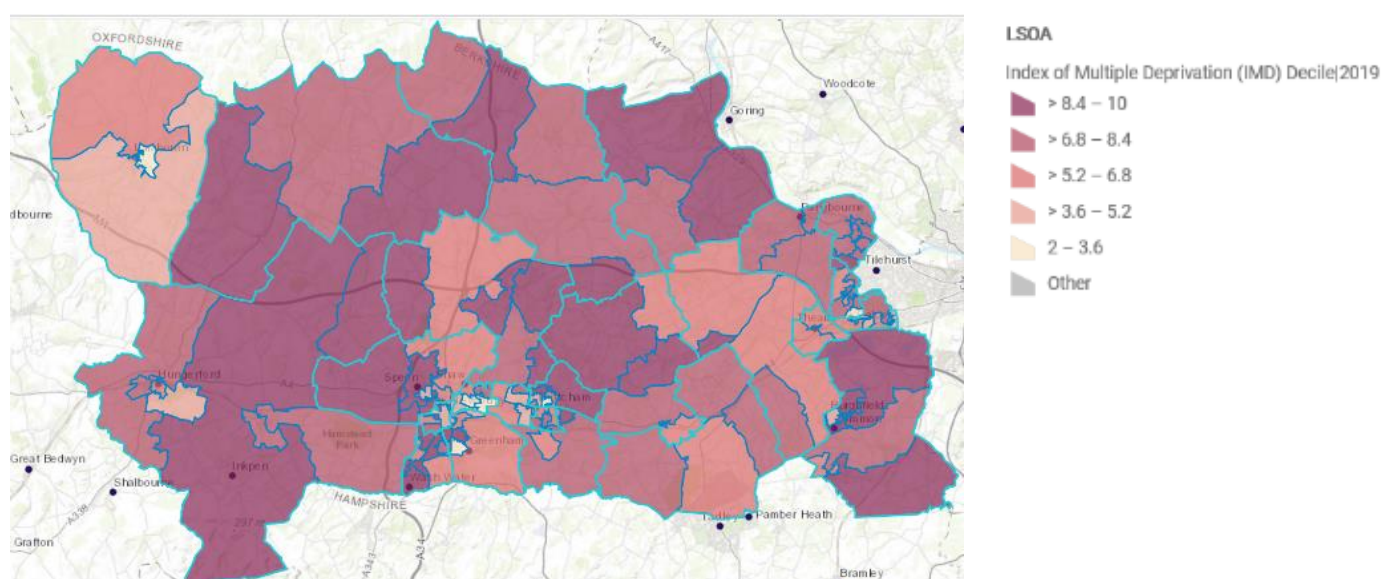
Figure 13: 2019 IMD – domain for education, training and skills

5.23   The Economic Development Strategy also has been updated in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic[18]. This notes the particular impact of the pandemic on the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors, which employ 16% of local people, many of them young people, women or people from ethnic minorities. It sets out the need for support to help those who have lost their jobs to securing long term employment.

5.24   This also highlights changes in patterns of work accelerated by the pandemic. This includes the trend to home working (one third of West Berkshire workers were able to work from home during the Covid-19 period). This is likely to have a long-term impact on the future use of commercial property, with a reduction in office space and to exacerbate strains on local high streets. Nationally there is a growing demand for co-working space as well as growth in creative micro-businesses that people run as a side activity. A local evidence base has not yet been assembled, but the strategy recognises the need to improve the available workspace in the district, and to help start-ups and small

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[16] https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/social-justice-inclusion/youth-commission/youth-opportunity-index/ (accessed 16 November 2021).

[17] Data from the ONS annual population survey for 2020, accessed via NOMIS in November 2021.

[18] *Economic Development Strategy Refresh*, West Berkshire Council, June 2021

businesses grow, including by providing incubator space and "one stop shop" business advice service and website signposting.

5.25 Linked to this is the question of the health of town centres. The need for action to support town centres that are desirable for residents and visitors is noted in the Health and Wellbeing Vision. This was written pre-pandemic and was couched in terms of a response to the growth of online shopping. The trend has been sharpened by the pandemic. For example, the Covid-19 response survey conducted in summer 2020[19] asked how often respondents thought that they would visit their local town's high street when able, compared with before the pandemic. Only 54% responded "about the same, while 31% answered "less" or "much less".

Digital skills

5.26 The council's *Digital Strategy 2020-23*[20] commits it to playing an active part in ensuring those who live and work in West Berkshire are able to improve their digital skills. This directly refers to the aim of assisting people with Universal Credit and job applications, including by volunteers in libraries, as well as Citizens Advice. The strategy does not present local data about the extent of the need, but notes: "whilst the advancement of technology has brought many benefits, the UK Consumer Digital Index in 2019 found that one fifth of the UK population do not have foundational digital skills." The need to address this is further developed in the *Economic Development Strategy*, which identifies that there is a need for upskilling in the education sector and for providing a broader range of specialists in West Berkshire who are equipped to deliver the training that will address this.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- At least in the short-term, how to help those whose jobs have been affected by the pandemic and are looking for new opportunities and potentially new directions.

- Providing an environment that supports older and disadvantaged people looking to participate in the workforce.

- Being a location for access to information about training, and for delivery of training in smaller towns.

- Workspace, with facilities for workers otherwise based at home and for small and start up businesses. Linking this to the role of libraries in attracting people to town centres.

- Direct support with digital skills.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire with a housing mix with something for everyone"

5.27 This is important as a context factor for the libraries review. It includes a focus on increasing the amount of affordable housing. This recognises the challenge of attracting and retaining young people who in the past have reached university age and then left an area of generally high house prices. An additional aspect is extending provision of residential care bed spaces for the ageing population as well adaptations to help older people remain living at home.

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[19] *Residents' Survey: Covid-19 – Headline Findings Report*, West Berkshire Council, July 2020
[20] *Digital Strategy 2020-23*, West Berkshire Council, November 2019

Points to consider in terms of library services

- The implication for libraries is that existing patterns of population will change and they can expect to need to continue to adapt as these changes take place in the medium term. Space needs to be flexible.

"We will have delivered a West Berkshire with beautiful, historic and diverse landscapes and a strong cultural offering"

5.28 This area of aspiration creates a strong sustainability and quality of life agenda that libraries can help to support. This relates to more partnership working, increased links with cultural organisations and, as evidenced in the public survey, a desire to see libraries as places which have a strong cultural element including events, exhibitions, courses and classes.

5.29 West Berkshire has a number of rich cultural assets and a tradition of a large number of events and activities. However, the *Cultural Heritage Strategy*[21] notes that consultation has emphasised the difficulty many residents have in gaining access to these. There are strong links between arts and cultural participation and good wellbeing, so a priority theme of the Cultural Heritage Strategy is to improve access and participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including children from deprived backgrounds.

Points to consider in terms of library services

- Events and exhibitions to engage people in and promote sustainable choices.

- Linkage to the promotion of access and participation in arts and cultural activities.

Public engagement survey

5.30 A public engagement survey was carried out in late autumn 2021 as part of a review of the whole library service, including mobile libraries, the "At Home" service and e-library, regular activities for children and families, and annual events such as the Summer Reading Challenge. The aim of the survey was to collect feedback from the service's customers and from those who do not use libraries to assess potential changes to improve the service, and to develop the service in the future.

- There were 896 survey responses which represents 5.72% of active library borrowers based on pre-pandemic levels in 2019/20.

- 71% of responders were female.

- 63% were aged over 55.

- 91% were library users.

5.31 Some headlines from the survey are included here to give some additional context to the needs assessment.

5.32 In some ways the responses indicated that a lot of respondents primarily enjoy the "traditional" aspects of the library service - 57% said that book related services were the ones they used most. This may reflect the older demographic of the majority of those surveyed but there was also

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[21] *West Berkshire Cultural Heritage Strategy 2020-2030*, West Berkshire Council

recognition of the value of digital services, information provision and events. However, some respondents were clearly not well informed about the breadth of the current offer - one noted "[I] didn't realise you provide so much!". 13.6% said that lack of awareness of services provided was a reason they had not used library services in the last two years and 16% said that had not used it as they did not think the service was relevant to them.

5.33   On balance, the responses show a good level of support for libraries playing a broader role as a community facility. There were several positive comments about the way that the Hungerford and Lambourn libraries work with their communities; good support for the role of libraries in providing digital access for some people; and positive response to the idea of services that connect vulnerable groups more to their communities and reduce isolation.

5.34   There was evidence, however, of a minority of respondents who felt that the service should prioritise what was perceived as a core task done well - providing access to books. Others voiced concerns about whether current buildings would have adequate space for more community focused activities, while some respondents were concerned about the impact on noise levels.

5.35   There were several messages about the current offer:

- A very high level of satisfaction with the current staff and service.

- There were several comments indicating a wish for a better e-book and audio-book offer, including a wish for more books and a better search / user interface. There are some practical limitations on these services - the comments suggest the need to explain factors such as the limitations of digital rights management and why there are two services to customers.

- There were several comments from people who would like longer or more flexible opening hours. This is likely to reflect the restrictions on getting to libraries faced by working age people or those wishing to visit with school aged children.

- There is a deep appreciation of the "At Home" service by its users and a set of very appreciative comments from regular users of the mobile library.

- There were several comments about a wish for closer working with schools - this was raised in responses to several questions so may indicate a small number of users to whom this is very important issue.

5.36   The responses clearly show the continued impact that the Covid-19 pandemic is having on people's library habits with several users explaining how they were still fearful of making visits to the extent that they had before March 2020.

Cross-cutting themes and implications for libraries

5.37   This section aims to set out some conclusions about the areas where libraries can support the needs identified. It draws on insights from the round of interviews carried out as part of this work and suggests some cross-cutting themes.

5.38 One of the themes of the interviews we carried out was the difficulty of engaging the disadvantaged communities in West Berkshire. Some interviewees had a perception that libraries are underused by residents in the more deprived areas who see them as serving a middle-class demographic. For example, while West Berkshire has a high participation rate for the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), there is a question about whether it reaches the children and young people who stand to benefit most. The chart below, based on 2021 data shows that the lowest rate of completion is in Lambourn, which has the most deprived library catchment area. Some responses to the staff survey also indicated that a lot of the children who sign up to SRC are not those who need most help with their reading.
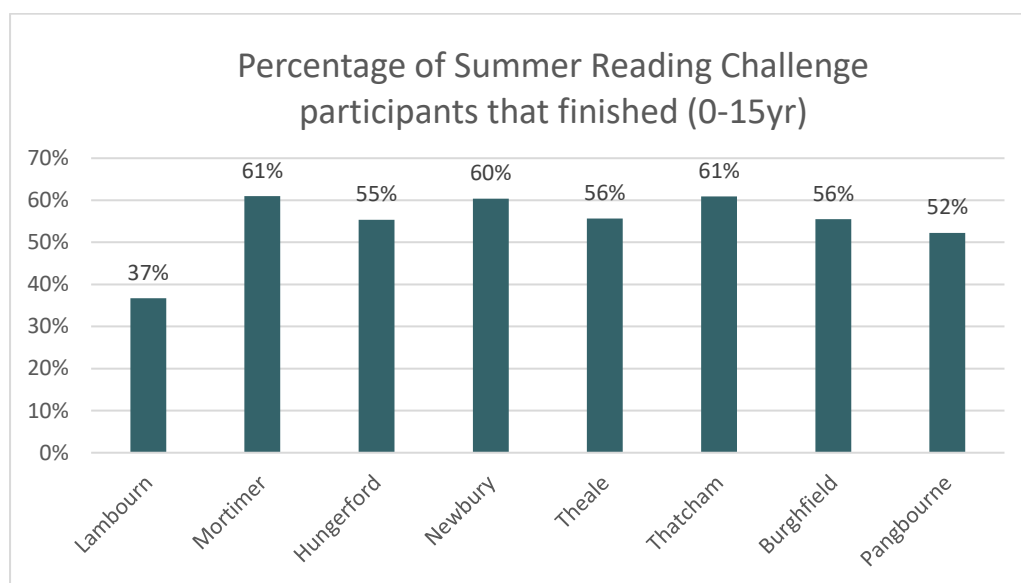
Figure 14: 2021 Summer Reading Challenge finishers by library

5.39 It is important to note that the Reading Agency has now released statistics for the 2021 Summer Reading Challenge. West Berkshire had the highest percentage reach in the South East of England, with 16% of 4-12 year olds taking part. This is due to a high level of engagement with schools which the library service has worked very hard to develop since 2017.

5.40 Identified needs include:

- While there are strong building blocks in partnership with children's services through the Bookstart and Imagination library schemes, there is a strong case for more linked activity, given the large attainment gap that opens up during secondary education. An important theme is the need to encourage intergenerational reading and learning.

- Greater dedicated resource for promoting library services. Education staff interviewed emphasised that much effort is needed to engage schools, constantly promoting and re-promoting library offers.

- Closer linkage of promotion of the library and education adult learning offers. We understand that there are practical limits on this created by the individual learning

record that needs to be maintained for formal courses, but there is scope for more shared marketing to help engagement.

- Looking at the role of the mobile library as a means of engaging communities. Can it be combined with other services as part of a wider mobile outreach service and targeted more at harder to reach communities and estates? See paragraphs 6.24 to 6.28 for discussion of the mobile library.

- Review of foreign language information and resources in libraries, including to reflect the growth of Syrian and Afghan refugee numbers.

- Review the approach to fines. This was a small factor in the public survey (7.4% of respondents identifying concerns about overdue fines as a reason for not using library services in the previous two years). However, anxiety about fines was identified by one voluntary and community sector representative, and several staff in their survey responses, as a barrier to some disadvantaged groups in becoming library borrowers.

Access to information and services

5.41   This is an important theme in the context of a district with a large rural area that has nearly two thirds of its LSOAs ranked in the three most deprived deciles nationally for barriers to housing and services. Public sector information and transactions are increasingly available only digitally, with limited face to face customer service points. Some facilities, like arts, are perceived as Newbury focused. It is increasingly challenging to provide bus services in rural areas.

5.42   In our interviews, we repeatedly heard concerns about digital exclusion and its implication for access to information and services. There are three dimensions – lack of access to devices, internet connection and digital skills. Examples given include people with mental health support needs who would like assistance in accessing housing support and information.

5.43   We also heard a lot of support for the concept of community hubs and the advantages of co-locating libraries with other public services or community facilities. This would mean building on the positive experience in Hungerford. The convenience of combined access for users was highlighted as especially helpful for people with learning disability or mental health needs.

5.44   Identified needs include:

- More tailored IT support and infrastructure at libraries. Staff are very clear that to enable libraries to address digital inclusion, they need IT support suitable for a public facing context. Currently computers are set up with the same restrictions as staff equipment meaning that support has to be called for any issue, including some software updates. There is only one part-time member of IT support staff with detailed knowledge of the library public access computers, leading to slow response times and frustration for the public. The council has invested heavily in libraries IT provision and the public access computers (hardware and software) in all libraries were replaced in 2019. There have, however, been problems with the implementation of the new equipment in terms of its integration with the bookings management system and printing. In 2019/20, 5,900 (7%) of computer hours were lost because of technical

problems requiring maintenance (compared with 83,700 available hours). In April to July 2021 over 2,000 hours have been lost. This is in addition to issues that do not warrant a full shutdown. Staff also report that the corporately procured multi-functional devices providing printing/photocopying/scanning facilities are not suited to public requirements, particularly in terms of photocopying. There is a strong need to allow members of the public to print via wifi from their own devices and with simple payment mechanism.

- Staff training to enable an "assisted digital" service to be offered more consistently.

- Consideration of the scope to establish more community hubs.

Community resilience

5.45   As local public service budgets have reduced in recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to meet rising demand. It is increasingly important that communities harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action.

5.46   According to the 2014 JSNA[22], an estimated 14,000 people in West Berkshire (9.3% of the population) provide unpaid care. The social care system would not be sustainable without their support.

5.47   We have highlighted the large instance of secondary level mental health problems. The JSNA *Living Well – Mental Health in Adults* [23] notes that excess under 75 mortality rate in adults with serious mental illness in West Berkshire was the highest in the South East region. Without strong community links, it can be hard to understand who may be isolated and at risk.

5.48   As in many areas, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a surge in community action. 25.3% of respondents to the 2020 Covid-19 survey said they had volunteered to help in their local community during the pandemic and 35.9% of respondents said they felt more connected to their local community than previously.

5.49   Library use has been shown to have a range of health and social benefits including socialisation and provision of respite for carers and new parents, improved health literacy through health drop-ins, and reduced loneliness and isolation especially for older people living alone. These benefits can be experienced by ordinary users and by library volunteers. A clear message from the interviews we conducted is that libraries have a contribution to make here and that a stronger contribution to community resilience requires co-design of the offer at a local level to reflect hyper local needs.

5.50   Identified needs include:

- Lambourn has an effective model of community co-design, based on the Lambourn Library Volunteer Group and the Friends of Lambourn Library. As well as mobilising extensive volunteer support, it helps to tailor the service to the local needs, linked to a low wage horse-racing focused economy. It also works to animate groups and provide

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[22] *Vulnerable Groups – Carers*, West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2014
[23] *Living well – Mental Health in Adults*, West Berkshire Council Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, 2016

social interaction in an isolated community. Can this level of engagement be encouraged in other library locations?

- Establishing libraries as a location for "mental health first aid".

- Greater promotion of room hire opportunities, to encourage community groups to meet locally. This raises the question of whether the library building can be open outside of library opening hours (as is the case in Hungerford) to allow community access.

- The public survey showed some concern (about the risk of diluting perceived core purpose, about space and noise) in any broadening of library services. The tone of these comments strongly point to the need for co-production with communities about expanding any library's role.

Skills and the economy

5.51 Libraries have a well-established role in supporting skills development and employment. This ranges from computer "code" clubs for children, to the PC access which allows job seekers to make online applications or create CVs. However, changing patterns of work, and changing skills requirements, mean that there is potential for libraries to play a much greater role in economic support. The changing context includes:

- More people working from home, a trend greatly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- A growth in micro businesses run from home, often in creative or craft sectors.

- Employers are particularly looking for business focused digital skills – not coding, but rather applied skills such as social media marketing and database use.

5.52 Identified needs include:

- Provision of more desk space for non office-based workers to use to work – for example young people who do not have study space at home.

- Provision of enhanced facilities for micro-businesses, for example 3d printers, and other facilities on the model of the "Makerspaces"[24] concept to encourage co-creation, sharing resources and knowledge, and networking.

- Building on these concepts, establishing libraries as a focal point for encouraging people into town centres. There are opportunities in the master planning exercise which has taken place in Newbury, and this opportunity is discussed in section 6.

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[24] Government guidance on Makerspaces is at this link: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-and-makerspaces/libraries-and-makerspaces The concept of establishing them in libraries was included in the UK Digital Strategy, 2017.

6 Library locations

Purpose of this section

6.1 Part of the brief for this work is to analyse the location of libraries in relation to population and existing customers. The static library locations are long-established and it is important to review them, in a context where an average of around 500 new homes have been built per annum between 2006/07 and 2018/19 and several thousand more are expected in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

6.2 In order to support this analysis, we have created a set of library "catchments". We have matched postcode data for active borrowers for each library in 2019/20 to their LSOA. We have then identified for each of West Berkshire's 97 LSOAs which library is the most popular among its active borrowers. We have then allocated that LSOA to that library's catchment. The table at Appendix II shows for each LSOA the percentage of active borrowers using its most used library.

6.3 This enables us to assess the patterns of use for each library in relation to IMD scores and to understand the hinterland from which it attracts its borrowers. Two caveats about the method do need to be stated:

- Some post codes are not co-terminous with LSOAs. This means that some properties may exist both sides of a LSOA boundary. In such cases, the postcode will be allocated to one side according to its centroid. This means that our catchments cannot be 100% accurate around boundary thresholds.

- The strength of "popularity" of the most used library varies among the LSOAs. In some cases, it is very high (99%) and in others lower (the lowest is 37% - meaning that in such cases, it is just a couple of borrowers which determine the catchment allocation)[25].

- Catchment information and associated IMD average decile information are shown below. The IMD number indicates the average decile position on a 1 to 10 scale – a high number correlates with least deprivation:

Library catchment	Population of catchment	Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	Income	Employment	Education, Skills and Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
Burghfield Common	7,675	8.4	8.2	8.6	7.6	8.0	7.4	6.6	7.6
Hungerford	9,470	7.5	7.0	8.3	6.7	8.7	8.2	6.8	4.7
Lambourn	4,245	6.3	5.7	7.3	3.7	7.7	5.7	4.0	5.7
Mortimer	5,816	7.7	7.3	7.7	7.7	8.3	6.7	6.0	3.7
Newbury	63,597	7.9	7.7	7.9	7.0	8.6	7.8	5.3	6.0
Pangbourne	18,751	9.4	9.0	8.9	7.9	9.4	9.2	6.6	8.3
Thatcham	28,307	8.1	7.5	7.6	6.4	8.3	8.2	6.3	8.2
Theale	20,589	7.9	7.7	7.9	6.0	8.6	7.8	4.9	8.1

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[25] In one LSOA, E01016262, two libraries (Pangbourne and Theale) were of equal popularity and proximity. We allocated it to Pangbourne, but accept it could equally have been allocated to Theale.

6.4   Key points from this table are:

- Newbury has by far the largest catchment. More than double the number of the next largest, Thatcham. It covers 37 of the 97 LSOAs in the district, several of which are some distance from Newbury, including in the north of the area. This may reflect borrowers' work location or a willingness to travel to the library. The catchment scores low on barriers to housing and services, which is further evidence that it extends to some people in the rural parts of the district.

- Pangbourne is the least deprived catchment.

- Lambourn is the most deprived and is so on all domains, except living environment[26]. There is a noticeable gap between its score on education, skills and training and the next most deprived.

- It is noticeable that the two libraries that are closest to each other, Burghfield Common and Mortimer, have the second and third smallest catchment populations. Overall, and on the domains other than health and disability, education, skills and training, the Mortimer catchment shows more deprivation than Burghfield Common.

6.5   It is helpful to overlay library activity patterns on some of the key aspects of the catchment analysis.

Library	Population of catchment	Library opening hours per week (31 March 2020)	Total active borrowers for library	Active borrowers as % of catchment population	Library visits (2019/20)	Visits per hour open	Visits per head of catchment population	Index of Multiple Deprivation (catchment)	Barriers to Housing and Services (catchment)
Burghfield Common	7,675	19	957	12.5	18,206	958	2.4	8.4	6.6
Hungerford	9,470	26	1,076	11.4	40,175	1,545	4.2	7.5	6.8
Lambourn	4,245	15.5	455	10.7	11,085	715	2.6	6.3	4.0
Mortimer	5,816	19	558	9.6	12,876	678	2.2	7.7	6.0
Newbury	63,597	47	7,815	12.3	171,119	3,641	2.7	7.9	5.3
Pangbourne	18,751	22	949	5.1	19,388	881	1.0	9.4	6.6
Thatcham	28,307	33.5	2,346	8.3	41,021	1,225	1.4	8.1	6.3
Theale	20,589	23.5	1,082	5.3	23,562	1,003	1.1	7.9	4.9

6.6   There are limitations to this analysis – the library data is based on raw information about the particular library and will include some users from outside the defined catchment, although all active borrowers described here have West Berkshire post codes. Nevertheless, it indicates some trends:

- The lowest percentage of active borrowers per population catchment is at Pangbourne, the least deprived catchment. It also has the lowest number of visits per head of catchment population. Theale also has low rates of borrowing compared with the catchment population.

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[26] The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Statistical Release of 26th September 2019 on IMD defines all the domains. "The Living Environment Deprivation Domain measures the quality of the local environment. The indicators fall into two sub-domains. The 'indoors' living environment measures the quality of housing; while the 'outdoors' living environment contains measures of air quality and road traffic accidents".

- Lambourn and Hungerford, are both in the higher half of percentages of active borrowers per population catchment. Both also score highly for the number of visits per head of catchment population. This may be an indicator of the strong community ownership or presence that they have (Hungerford operates as a community hub, supported by a charity, the Hungerford Library and Community Trust and Lambourn has active volunteer and friends groups, with good links to the racing community).

- Burghfield Common is the best used library in terms of active borrowers per population catchment.

- Newbury is the best used library, as would be expected from its position as the main library in the area and its large catchment. It is noticeable that it scores much higher than Thatcham on both percentage of active borrowers per population catchment and number of visits per head of catchment population.

6.7   Further trends about active borrowers can be seen in the series of maps below, which shows quintile analysis of the percentage of population in each LSOA that are active library borrowers at static libraries (based on 2019/20 data).
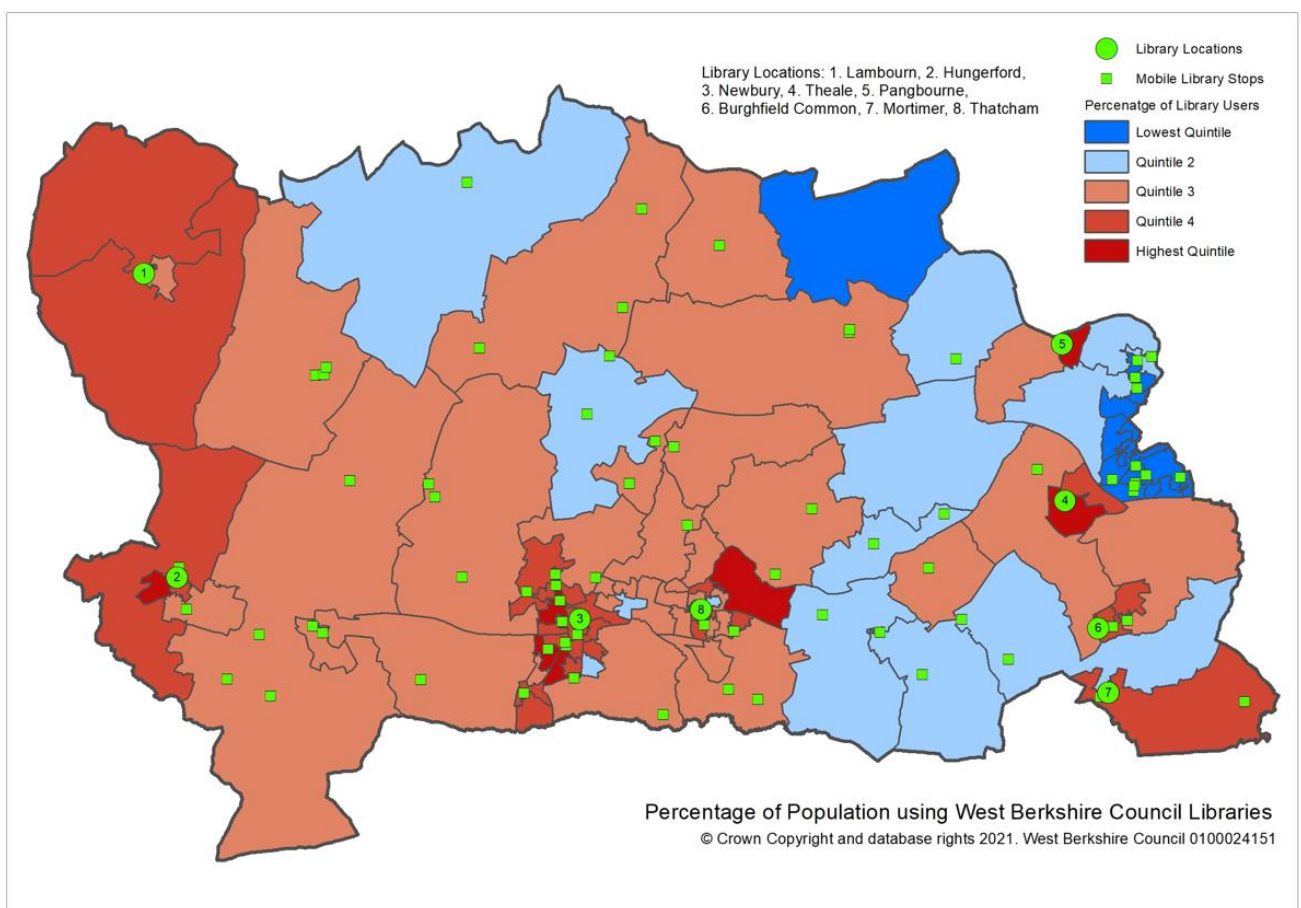

Figure 15: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (all ages)

6.8   This map shows:

- The density of borrowers is highest around library locations.

- The lowest quintile areas are relatively close to libraries in neighbouring authorities. These are Goring library for LSOA E01016257, which contains the parishes of Aldworth and Streatley; Reading Central and Caversham libraries, which are close to the block of low quintiles in the east of the area; and Tadley library in Hampshire, which is close to the Aldermaston area.

- There is some correlation between use and socio-economic conditions. The four most deprived LSAOs have use percentages at 6 or lower. These are in Newbury Greenham, Thatcham North East and in the Tilehurst South and Holybrook ward. However, there is a varied pattern among the least deprived LSOAs – 13 of those with the lowest 10% of deprivation have use percentages of less than 10%, while 12 of them have use percentages between 10 and 17%.

6.9 In order to test more the level of correlation between active borrowing and library use, we created the scatter chart, shown below. This plots the IMD score (a national measure) of each LSOA against its percentage of active borrowers:
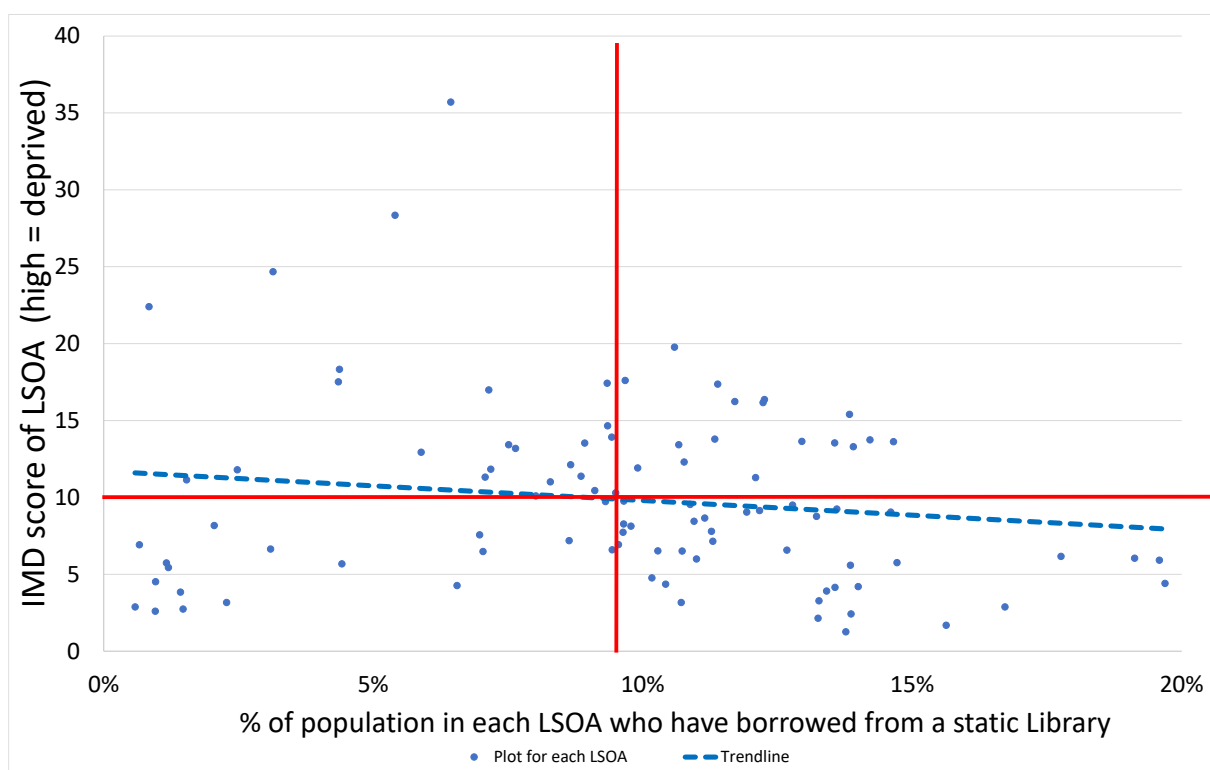
Figure 16: scattergraph of LSOAs by overall IMD rank and active borrower population percentage

6.10 This shows a slight trend towards least deprived areas (having lower IMD scores) being those where a greater proportion of people use libraries.

6.11 The trend is similar if we focus on the domain of barriers to housing and services. This indicates less library use in the more remote areas.
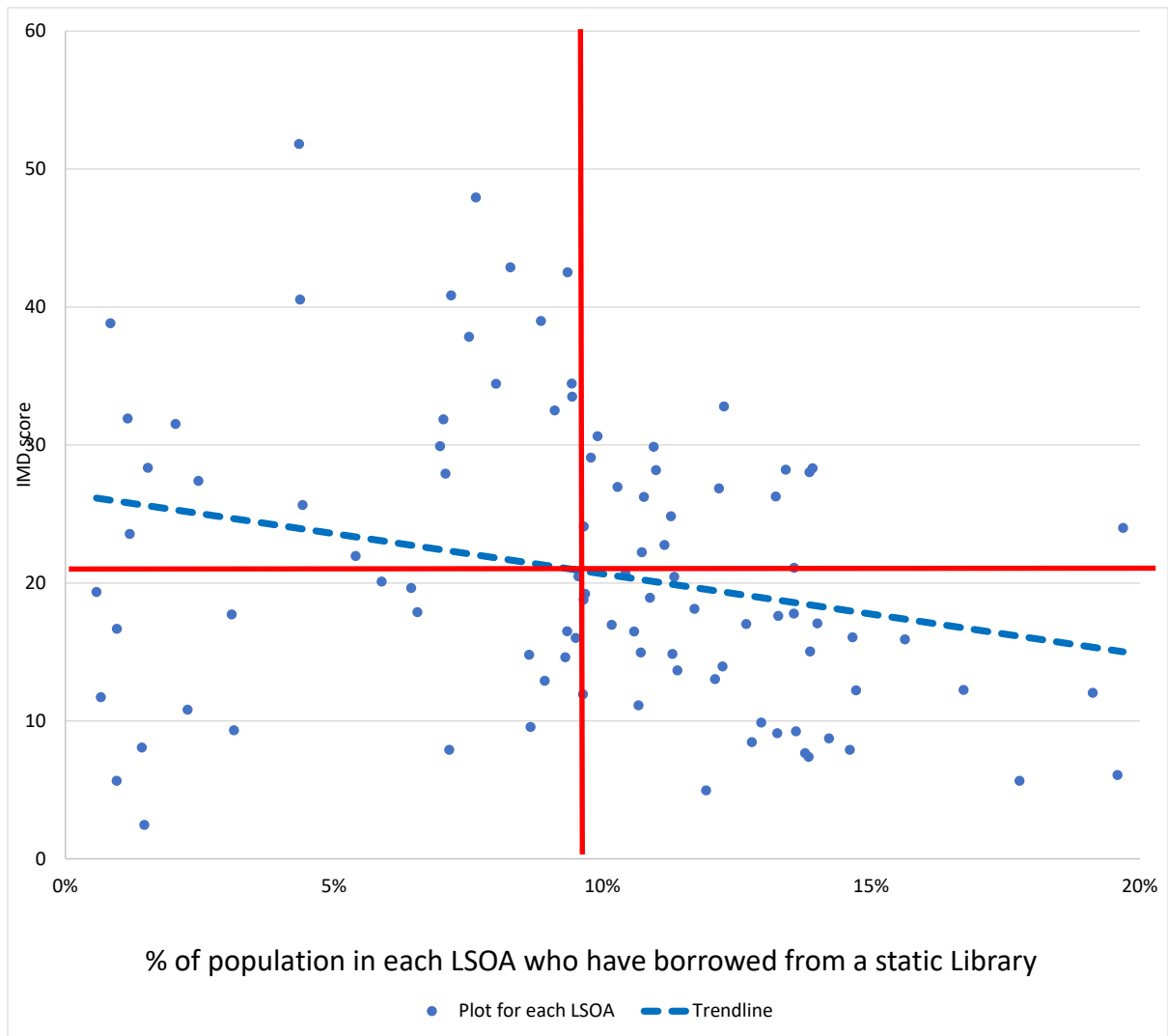
Figure 17: scattergraph of LSOAs by IMD barriers to services domain score and active borrower population percentage

6.12   Some further insights can be gained from maps for percentage of use based on age bands. Maps for junior users (0 to 17); adult users (18 to 74) and senior users (75+) are shown below.
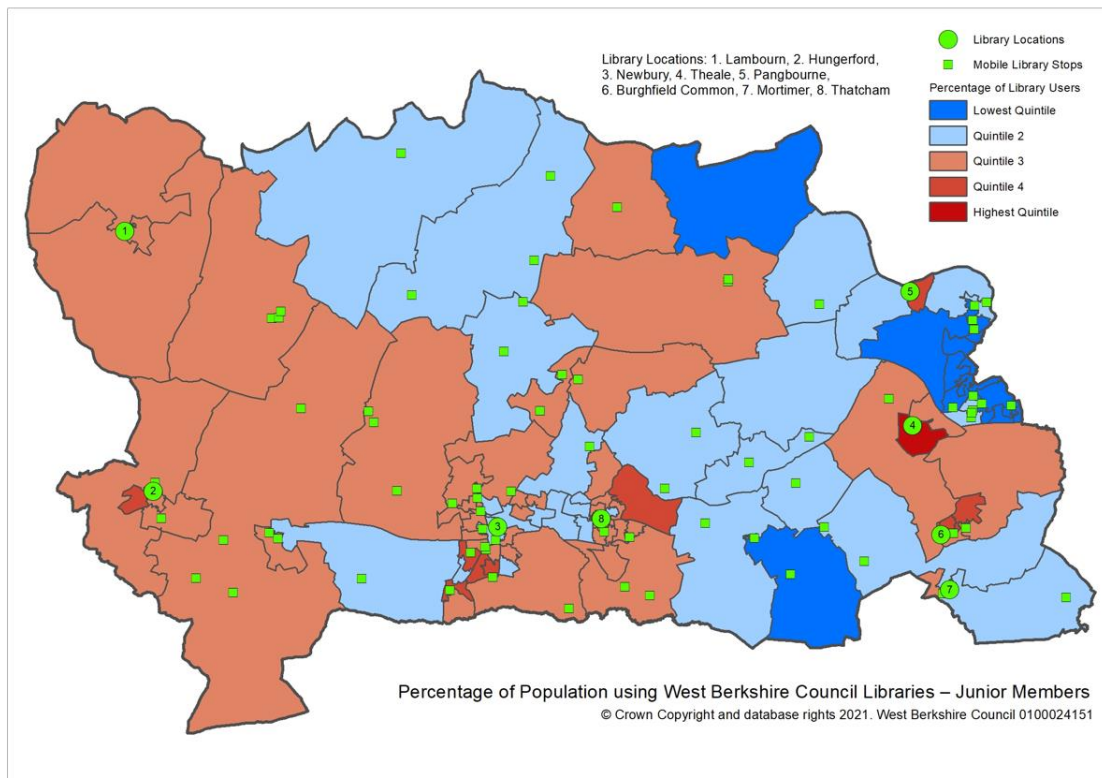
Figure 18: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (ages 0 - 17)
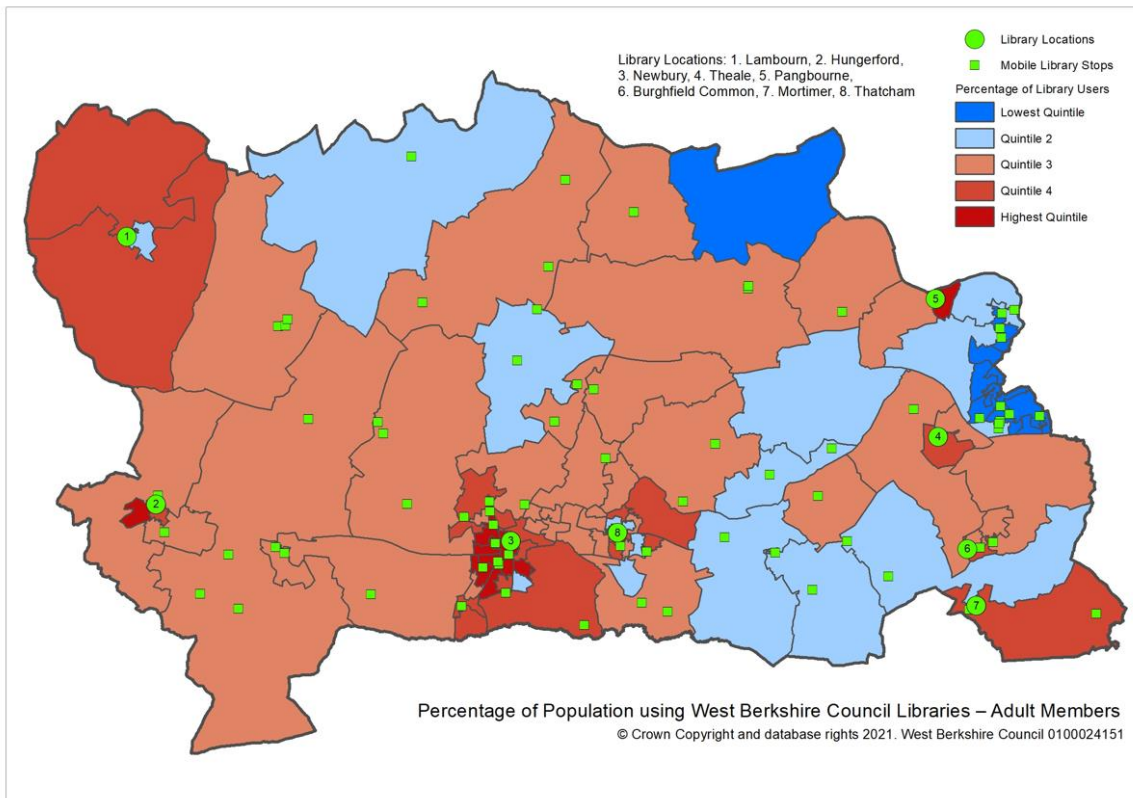
Figure 19: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (ages 18 - 74)
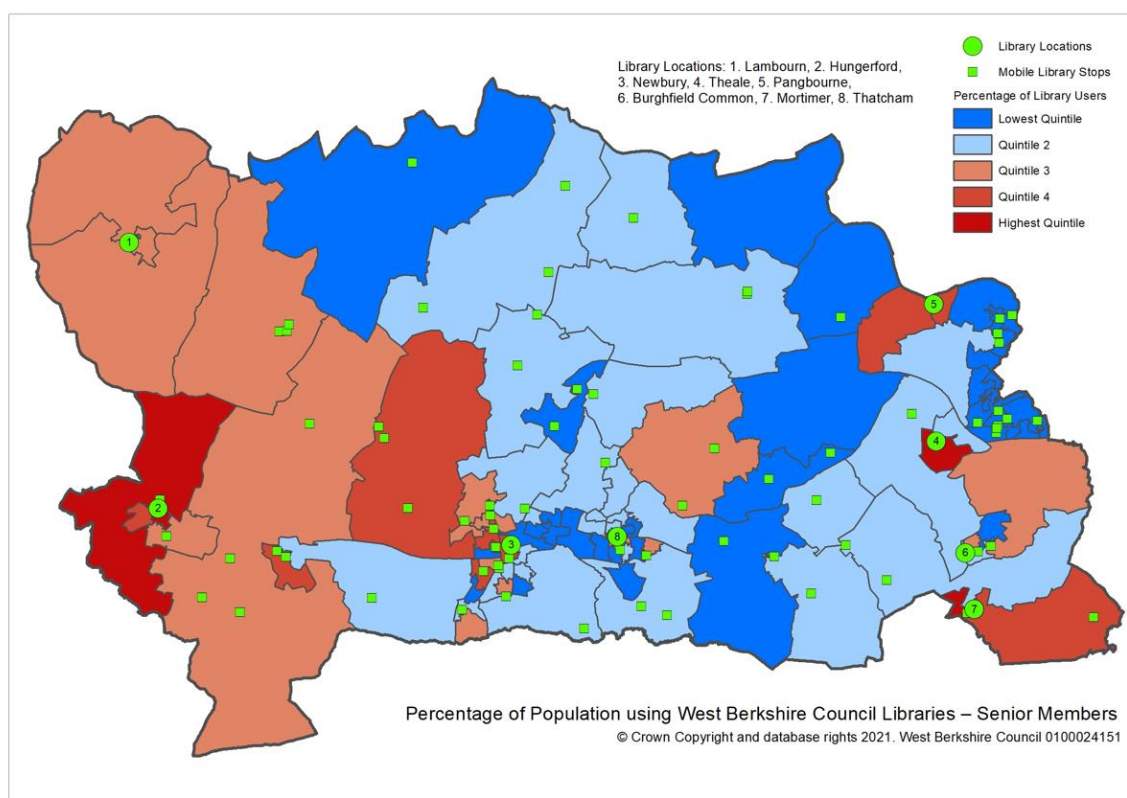
Figure 20: population rate using West Berkshire libraries by LSOA (age 75+)

6.13   This highlights some additional points:

- In the Lambourn area, junior engagement is in the middle quintile and adult activity is high, except for the area immediately around the town. This LSOA (E01016306) is in the bottom 20% for education, skills and training and may point to the need for a focus on intergenerational learning (see paragraph 5.8).

- Low junior engagement around Mortimer.

- Newbury and Thatcham. A corridor running east of Newbury towards Thatcham and around Thatcham is in the lowest quintile for over 75s. Parts of this corridor also have low use among junior members. The reasons for this are not clear. The average deprivation level is at or only one decile below the West Berks average on most IMD dimensions, although it is two below on education, skills and training.

- There is a clear drop off in library use among over 75s in the more remote parts of the district, particularly in the north.

- The areas to the west of Hungerford and Newbury seem to be very effective at engaging over 75s. LSOA E01016326, which covers the Speen, Boxford and Winterbourne parishes also has very high engagement of the "At Home" service.

Implications for the future of library locations

The interviews and evidence review for this needs assessment have highlighted a mix of needs and opportunities. These are set out below.

Thatcham

6.14   Thatcham Town Council's Town Plan 2014 – 19[27] noted how recent growth in population in Thatcham had not been matched by equivalent growth in services and infrastructure. Library staff described to us how the library building is too small for the town's needs and is also unattractive and hidden from view. Some improvements are planned, including changing the entrance area to help combat anti-social behaviour and to provide an accessible toilet. The town council provides £24,000 funding per annum, which is contingent on improvements being made. With new housing development coming, the Infrastructure Development Plan identifies the need for new library / community hub building in the town. Our analysis would support this as a way to promote more engagement in parts of surrounding area, particularly in Thatcham North East and among older people in the corridor to the west of the town. The current masterplanning exercise underway in Thatcham creates an opportunity for a strategic discussion about location and how to link library provision to other facilities.

Eastern part of the district

6.15   The four libraries in this area show varying patterns of use. Burghfield Common and Mortimer libraries are geographically quite close to each other and there is a contrast between their level of use (Burghfield Common relatively high in relation to its catchment population and Mortimer lower). The Mortimer building has been refurbished in the last five years and has a covenant requiring it to be used as a library. We understand that previous discussions with the parish council about creating a community hub space are currently paused due to the pandemic. The analysis of use suggests that this should be explored again as a way of improving engagement and access. The Burghfield Common building is part of Willink school with a locked door between the public library and the school. Recent discussions with the school have identified an appetite to merge the public and school libraries, with the aim of making better use of the space and promoting use by all age groups. This is clearly an opportunity to build on the good levels of use of the public library and to promote more engagement with the community. Some works would be needed to the current library building - essential maintenance only has been carried out in recent years while discussions took place with Burghfield Parish Council about the potential of relocating the library to be part of a proposed community hub. These plans were not progressed because of a change of plan by the Parish Council.

6.16   Use of the Theale and Pangbourne libraries are both low in relation to the population catchments. Pangbourne has a village centre location, which is a good basis on which to build greater community engagement. Theale scores poorly on the IMD access to housing and services domain, suggesting that exploration is needed of how to connect the library more closely with the community, especially in the area beyond the main settlement. Note that parts of the Theale building have been converted to offices, which provides income to make the location sustainable.

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[27] *Council Plan 2014 – 2019*, Thatcham Town Council, 2014

Western part of the district

6.17   Our analysis shows Hungerford to be a very popular library across age groups and it has by some way the highest number of visits per head of catchment population. This suggests that the hub model is highly successful for attracting local people to the building and that adapting this model should be considered in other locations.

6.18   Lambourn library is centrally located in the main high street. It is well used in terms of visits per head of its catchment population and has above average percentage of active borrowers from its catchment population. An area to consider is how to reduce the difference between the relatively low quintile adult library use in the LSOA immediately to the east of the town centre compared with the high quintile use in the rest of the catchment.

Newbury

6.19   Newbury library is in a purpose-built 20+ year old building, which has enjoyed good investment, such as recent upgrading of the lighting. The recent masterplanning exercise for the town centre, which has involved public consultation, proposes new community use for a car park area very near the library. This is a major opportunity for new physical space to be linked to different community uses. The economic development team see this as a way to address skills and small business support needs by creating co-working areas including with facilities for small creative, digital or craft businesses. Such space could also provide opportunities for culture and heritage related activity. Extended and more flexible space could also be an opportunity to address the sometimes contradictory needs for quiet space (for example to enable computer training for people with learning disabilities) and more lively welcoming areas for less engaged young people.

Northern part of West Berkshire

6.20   It is striking that the library locations mark out a horseshoe shape along the east side of the district, along the Kennet valley and then up to Lambourn. A large area of the north and central part of the district is not served by a static library, although there are mobile stops in most LSOAs. Some new housing is indicated in the infrastructure development plan for the North Wessex Downs area (see paragraph 3.3). In order to help assess whether there is a need for a library in this area, we have created an imagined catchment for a library site in this area – see map below:
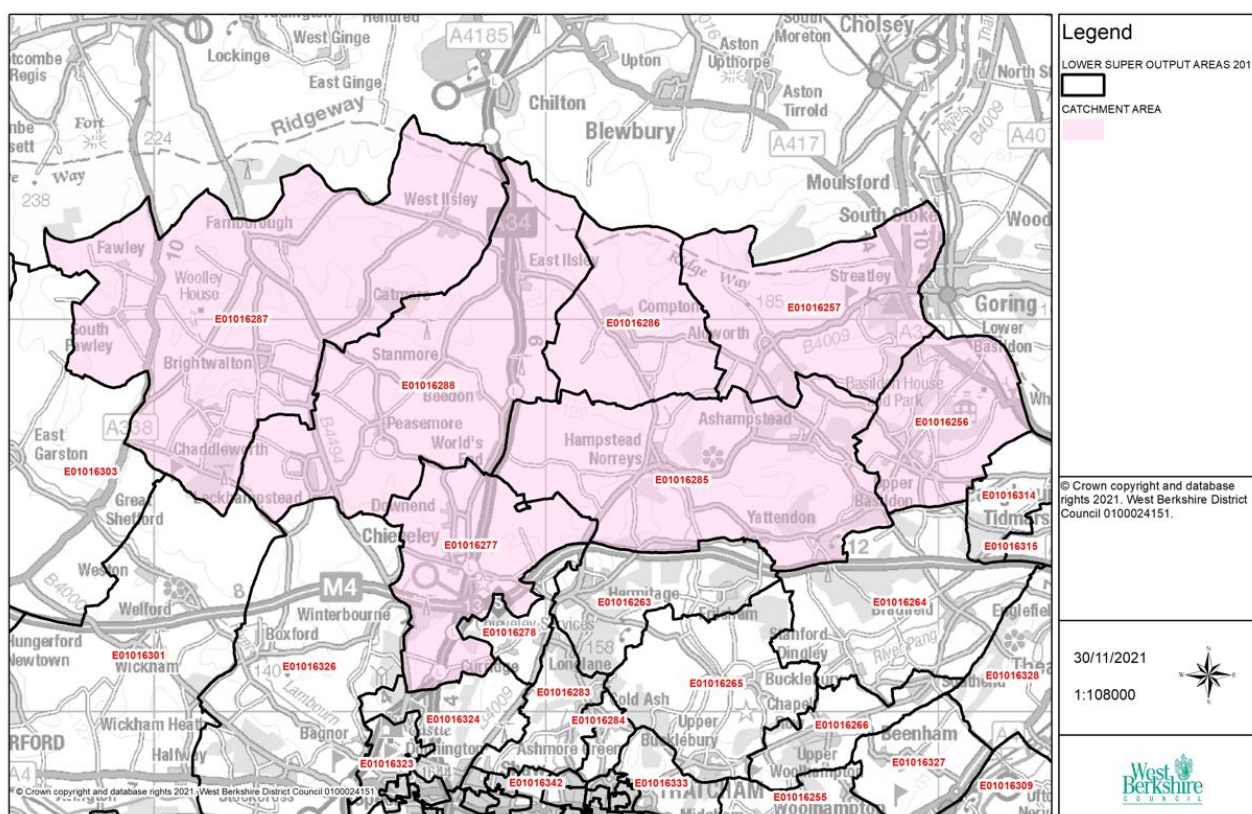
6.21   The key data for this catchment, compared with the average of the eight identified existing catchments, is shown below:

Library catchment	Population of catchment	Total active borrowers	Active borrowers as % of catchment population	Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	Income	Employment	Education, Skills and Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
Northern	11,252	766	6.8	7.9	8.9	9.4	8.3	9.7	7.7	2.9	3.7
West Berks average	19,806	1,905	9.4	8.1	7.7	8.0	6.8	8.6	7.9	5.7	6.9

6.22   It would be smaller than average but larger than the catchment population for Burghfield Common, Hungerford, Lambourn and Mortimer. The active borrowers expressed as a percentage of catchment population is based on use of the existing libraries and is higher than the figures for Pangbourne and Theale. However, the level of deprivation on most dimensions is lower than average. On employment, education, skills and training, and health, it would be less deprived than any existing catchment. However, it is noticeably more deprived on barriers to housing and services and living environment. Any future library provision could have a role in addressing this, particularly if it was closely associated with provision of access to other public services.

6.23   Most library users in this notional catchment currently are active borrowers at either Newbury (71%) or Pangbourne (20%). Part of the east of this notional catchment would also be relatively close to Goring library in Oxfordshire.

Mobile library service

6.24   Looking at data from 2019/20, the number of active borrowers from the mobile library was 682. This is lower than all the static libraries, expect for Lambourn (489) and Mortimer (579). Many of these

are also using other library locations. The table below shows the borrowers who have only borrowed from the mobile library, in comparison with the other libraries and services:

Library or service	Borrowers only using this service
Burghfield Common	487
Hungerford	649
Lambourn	296
Mortimer	299
Newbury	3,768
Pangbourne	620
Thatcham	928
Theale	477
WB Mobile	313
At Home	41
Web	131

6.25   As noted in paragraph 4.13, use of the mobile service has declined in the last decade, although the trend has been more stable since the consolidation to one service. The map below gives an indication of the pattern of use of the mobile library, showing quintiles for the percentage of the population in each LSOA that is using the service.
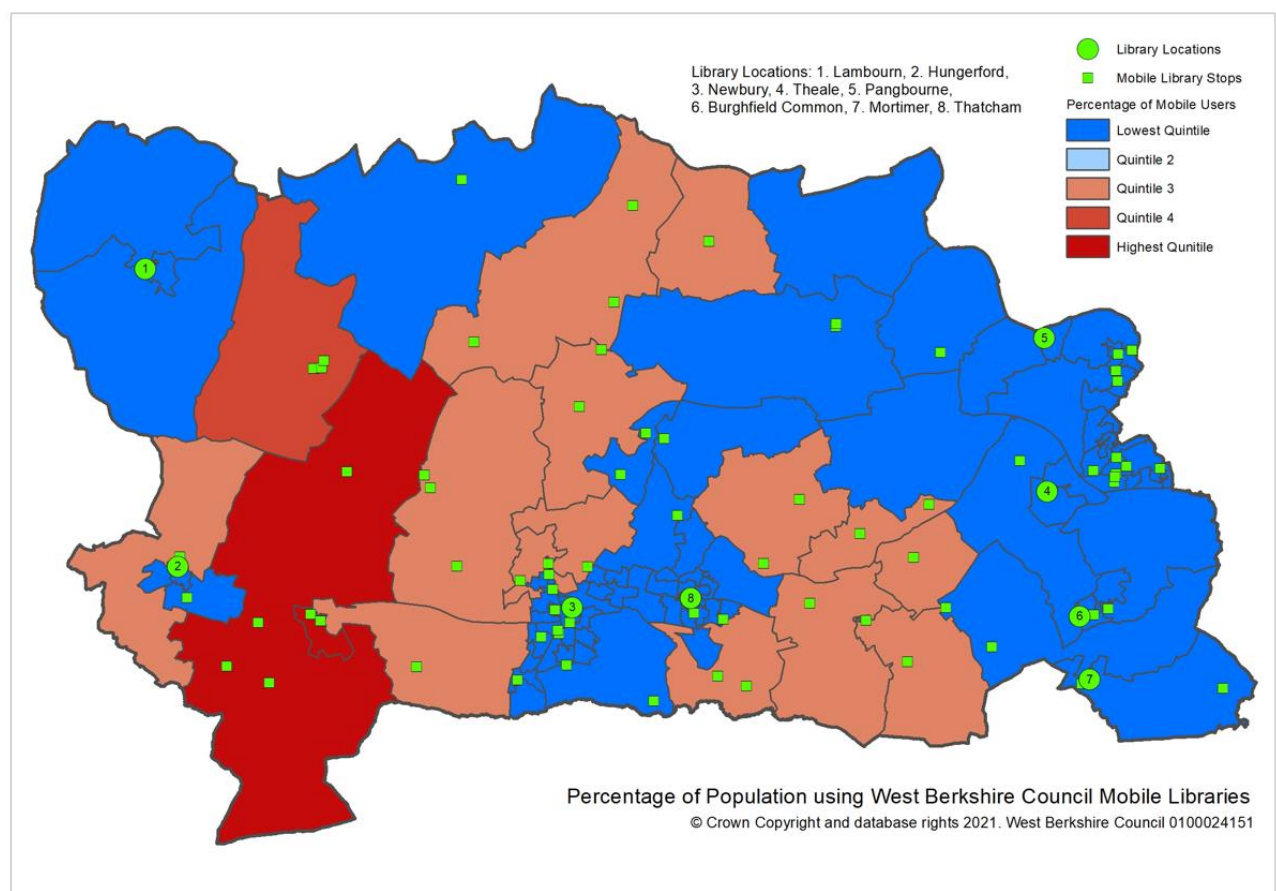
Figure 21: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (all ages)

6.26   Breaking the data down by age group shows that the service has greater take up by over 75s in some of the locations furthest from static libraries, as would be expected. 18 to 74 and under 18 use follows the overall pattern but with sparser use in some central and southern areas. In all cases, the low density of use in eastern areas is striking.
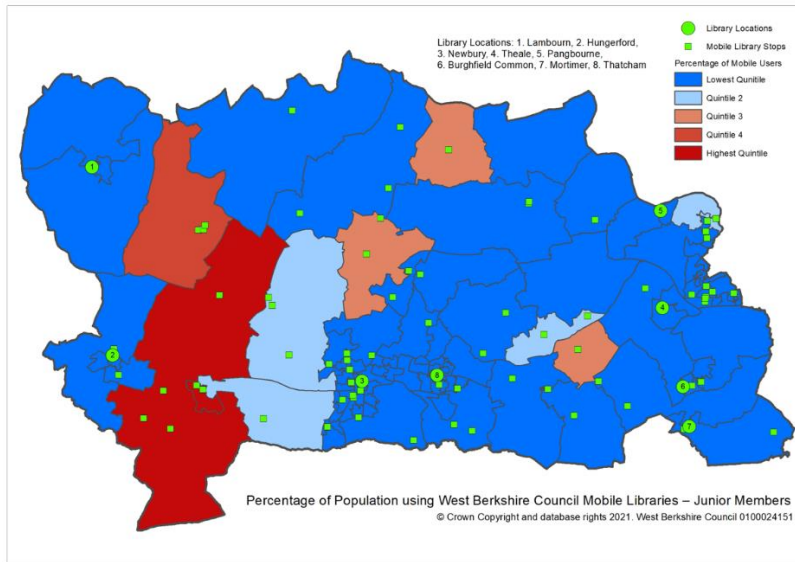
Figure 22: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (ages 0 - 17)
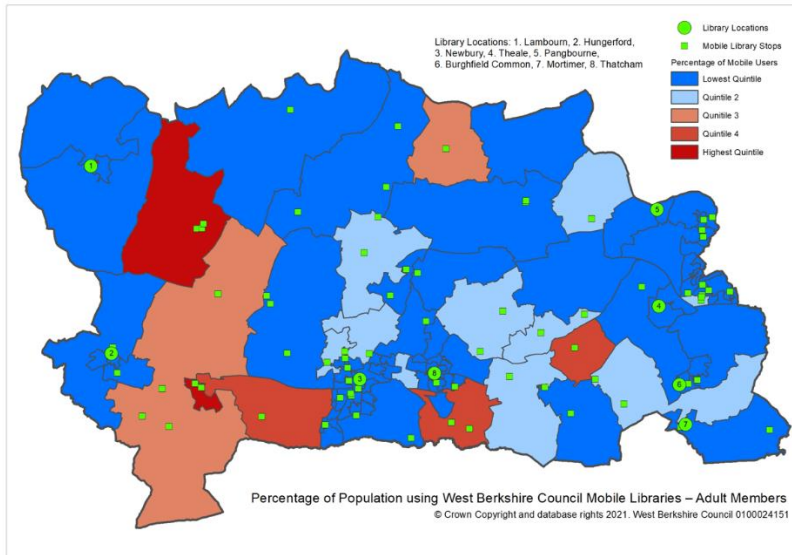
Figure 23: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (ages 18 - 74)
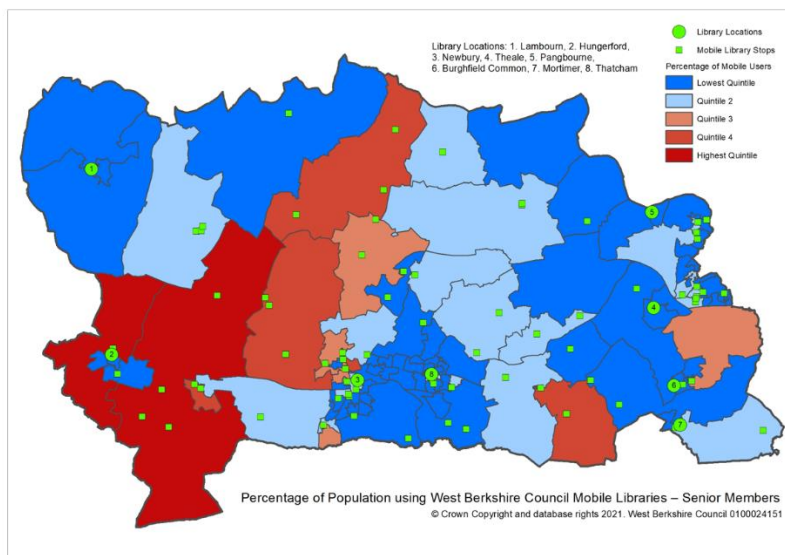
Figure 24: population rate using West Berkshire mobile library by LSOA (age 75+)

6.27 Our interviews identified an interest in exploring the wider outreach role of the mobile library and just over 30% of respondents to the staff survey identified the need for a little or a lot of improvement in the mobile service. One comment specifically talked about linking locations with schools, family hubs, community/day centres or leisure centres.

6.28 The current mobile vehicle is around 15 years old and is diesel powered. Age and sustainability considerations mean that it will need replacing in the short to medium term. We recommend that a feasibility study is carried out on the mobile service which should consider:

- The scope and appetite to link it with other local services, including advice and social prescribing.

- Customer engagement, about the balance of benefits between a mobile service and an enhanced "At Home" service.

- Assess the constraints created by narrow rural lanes – how far does this limit introducing a larger vehicle that could offer a blend of mobile council services?

- Review data about previous stops that have been targeted at, for example, schools.

7 Conclusion

7.1 This needs assessment highlights how the generally prosperous nature of West Berkshire masks some pockets of disadvantage. This is manifested through wide gaps between the best and worst performing figures in areas such as secondary school attainment and healthy life expectancy. It is also stark in employment, where the district ranks highest out of 150 authorities in terms of the employment rate for 23-28 year olds, but is 142nd for its net underemployment (the imbalance between the numbers of young people wanting to work more hours and the numbers wanting to work fewer). This needs to be set in the context of an area of ageing population and increasing imbalance between the number of retired and working age people and the challenges that creates for the sustainability of public services.

7.2 The Covid-19 pandemic has further shone a light on needs in areas such as social isolation, including of carers and people with learning disabilities, and the number of people with secondary mental health needs.

7.3 These trends point to four areas of important need in the district that the library service can do more to support:

- Engagement. Our research has highlighted the difficulty of engaging "hard to reach" communities and the headline indicator of this is the large secondary education gap. There is an important role for libraries to support wider efforts to address this, through a focus on intergenerational learning and wider prevention work. Serving this need will require consideration of approaches to marketing and how to create staff time for engagement and community activities. In order to gain results, outreach needs to be consistently delivered and regularly repeated and this requires resource to keep refreshing relationships with key partners such as schools. When community contacts leave, it is important to have capacity to develop relations with the new contacts to retain partnerships, and continue to provide a service which meets the needs of the whole community including "hard to reach". Discussions with staff for this needs assessment highlighted their view that they do not currently have the level of resourcing needed for this.

- Access to information and services. With a large rural area and increasing digitisation of public services, there is a need to promote digital inclusion. For libraries this means building offers of assisted digital support, particularly to older people and vulnerable groups who lack the confidence to use self-service channels, or do not have access to suitable devices or reliable internet connection. Serving this need will also require more tailored support arrangements for public facing information technology equipment and creates a staff training need.

- Community resilience. Particularly in the context of an ageing population, there is a growing need for communities to identify and harness their own strengths in connecting people to peer support, social interaction and community action. Libraries can support this by functioning as community hubs. This will need co-creation with communities and other

public service organisations. It requires consideration of factors such as whether a library building can be open outside of library opening hours for wider community uses.

- Skills and employment. This is an area where the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated changes in the pattern of work, creating a need to provide space and facilities to support home workers, micro businesses and job seekers. More widely, there are the challenges of younger people's social mobility and the participation in the labour market for older and disadvantaged groups. These are factors that can be supported with changes to the configuration of physical library space and equipment and by encouraging support networks, with partners to use libraries.

7.4 While West Berkshire's population is projected to be stable in the medium term, it has seen considerable house-building in the last two decades and more is projected. There is a need to review the pattern of provision to reflect changing the demography:

- East. There are four libraries relatively close together with varied patterns of use. There is a need to explore the potential for partnership to create more community hub style facilities that can promote engagement with the community. The recent discussions with Willink school about joint use and reconfiguration of the Burghfield Common site creates an opportunity to explore this. The level of community engagement in the west of the area in Hungerford, where the community hub is supported by a charity, and Lambourn, which is supported with active Volunteer and Friends Groups, also provide models which could be tested in the east..

- Newbury and Thatcham. Masterplanning work in the town centres is an opportunity to tailor library provision better to local needs. In Newbury, there is an opportunity to extend the current facility in a way that would support the employment and skills agenda. In Thatcham, patterns of use indicate a need for more engagement in parts of its surrounding area. Staff report that the current facility is poorly located and its potential constrained by its small size – creating a new facility that can better engage people needs to be explored in the planning exercise.

- North. A large area of the north and centre of the district is not served by a local West Berkshire library and active library borrowers mainly travel to Newbury or Pangbourne. Modelling a potential catchment for a library in this area shows its level of need on most indices of deprivation is low. However, it is a rural area which ranks very poorly on access to housing and services. Through consultation with stakeholders, there is a case to explore linking some library provision with a wider community hub idea.

Appendix I – library profiles

This appendix presents short profiles of each library in West Berkshire. The intention is to bring together key library specific information as a reference to support the service review. Note that "issues" in the tables below refers to physical issues from the library concerned – it excludes e-library downloads and web renewals which are not attributed to a particular library.

For the socio-economic profile we have used an average of the national decile rank for each LSOA in the catchment as this offers both a comparative West Berkshire and national perspective. IMD data can be presented in different ways and the table in Appendix III shows the decile rank information alongside the average calculated score for each catchment.

Burghfield Common

Catchment map
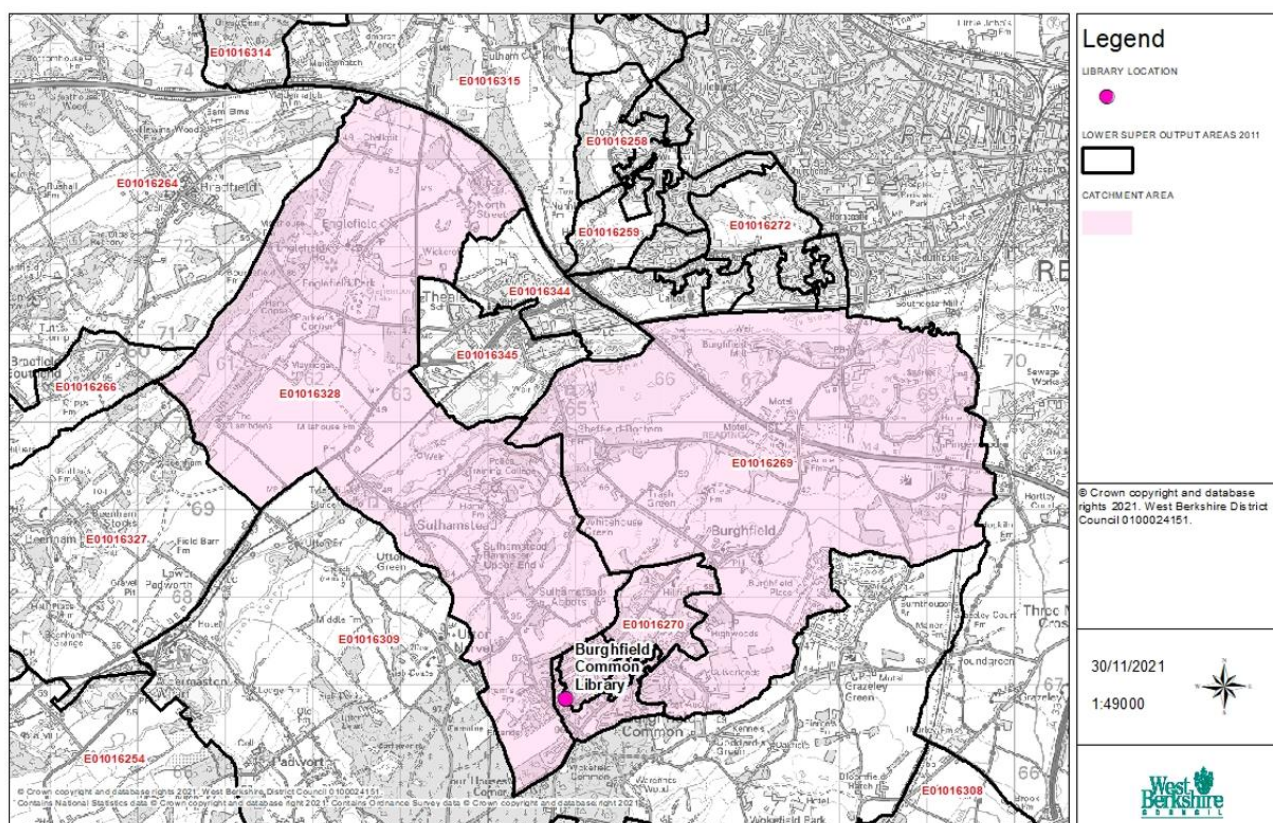
Library building

The library building is physically linked to Willink secondary school, but operates as a separate public library at the moment. The current building needs some attention as only essential maintenance work has been carried out for the last few years while discussions took place with Burghfield Parish Council about the potential for relocating the library to be part of a proposed community hub. These plans were not progressed because of a change of plan by the Parish Council.

More recently discussions have focussed on the possibility of a dual use library facility with Willink School.

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
7,675	1,008	18,206	21,801

Of the 1,008 active borrowers, 487 only borrowed items from Burghfield Common library. The most popular alternative location was Mortimer (109).

Burghfield Common has the highest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This is interesting, as it is also likely that some residents use Reading Library Services.

The library is open 19 hours a week and is busiest on Thursdays. Its busiest time for loans is between 3pm and 4pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
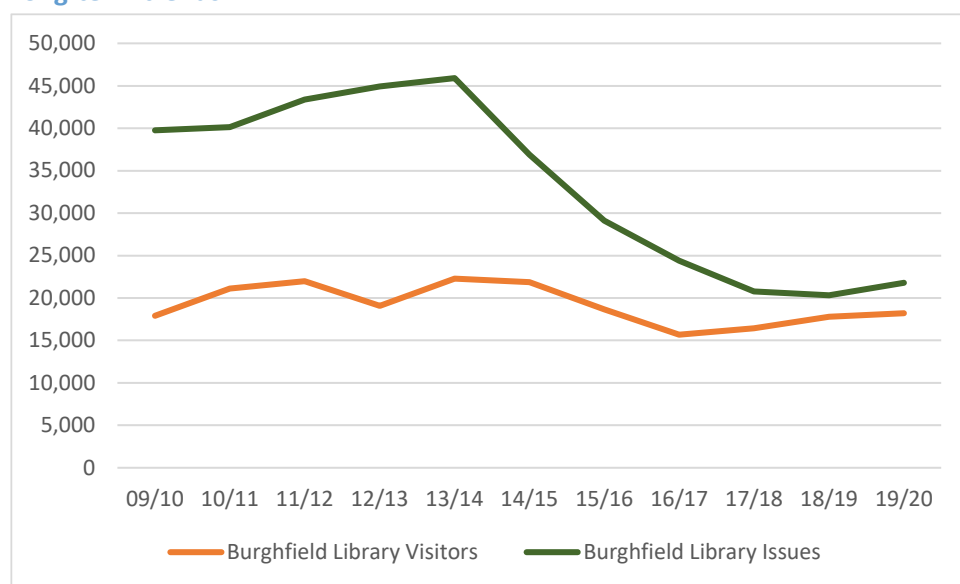
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends
Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 24%. This is slightly below average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 12% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD
Burghfield Common ranks as the second least deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is slightly above average on all dimensions except for health and crime.

IMD dimension	Burghfield Common catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	8.4	8.1
Income	8.2	7.7
Employment	8.6	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.6	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.0	8.6
Crime	7.4	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.6	5.7
Living Environment	7.6	6.9

User age profile

- This age group as percentage of Burghfield Common catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Burghfield Common catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Burghfield Common catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Hungerford

Catchment map
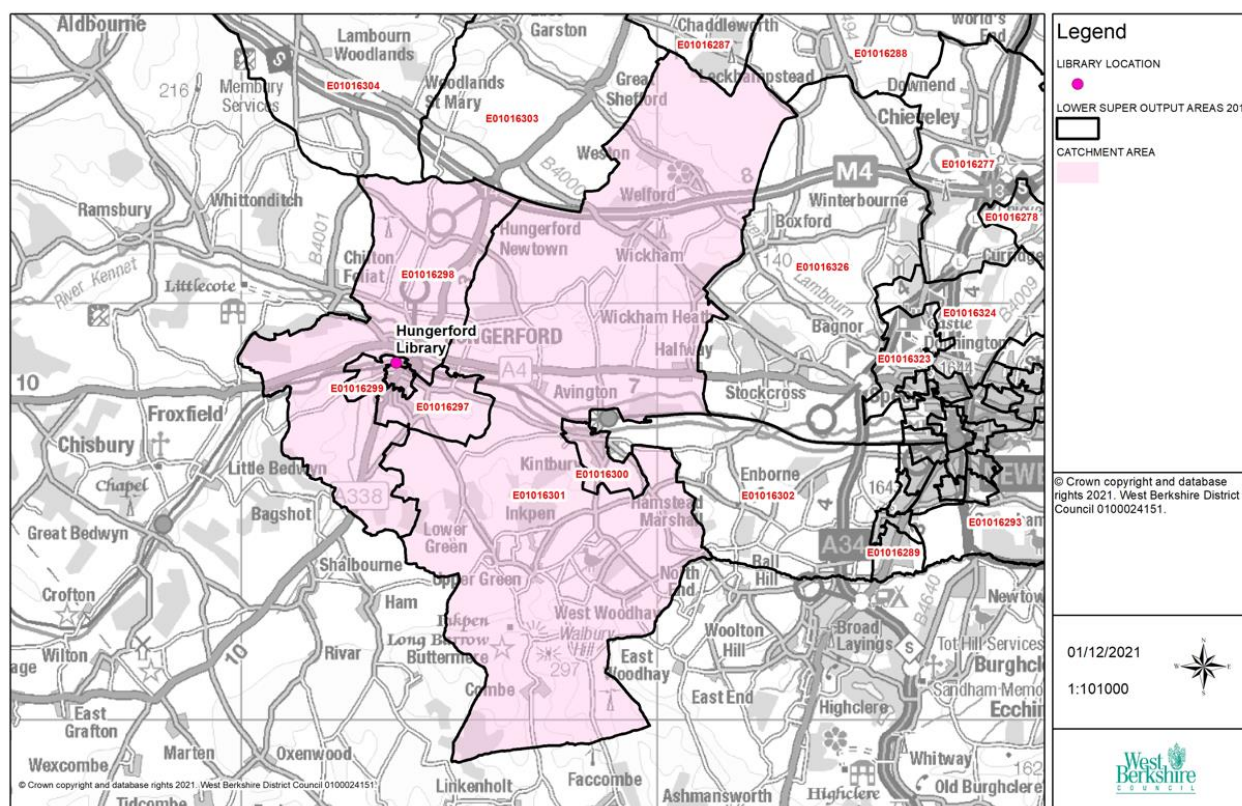
Library building

The library service now operates as part of the Hungerford Hub. The building is leased to the Hungerford Library and Community Trust and has been managed by them since 2018. It is used, outside of library hours, as a Hub for the people of Hungerford and the surrounding area and used to hold events such as workshops, talks and exhibitions. There is also a shop space for local artists and craftspeople to exhibit and sell their work. The space is also available to hire for local groups and individuals who need a small, comfortable space for their own events. This is a good example of how multi-purpose use in the right setting can work as a successful model.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
9,470	1,366	40,175	26,558

Of the 1,366 active borrowers, 649 only borrowed items from Hungerford library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (316).

The library is open 26 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. Its busiest time for loans is between 10am-11am or 11am and 12pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
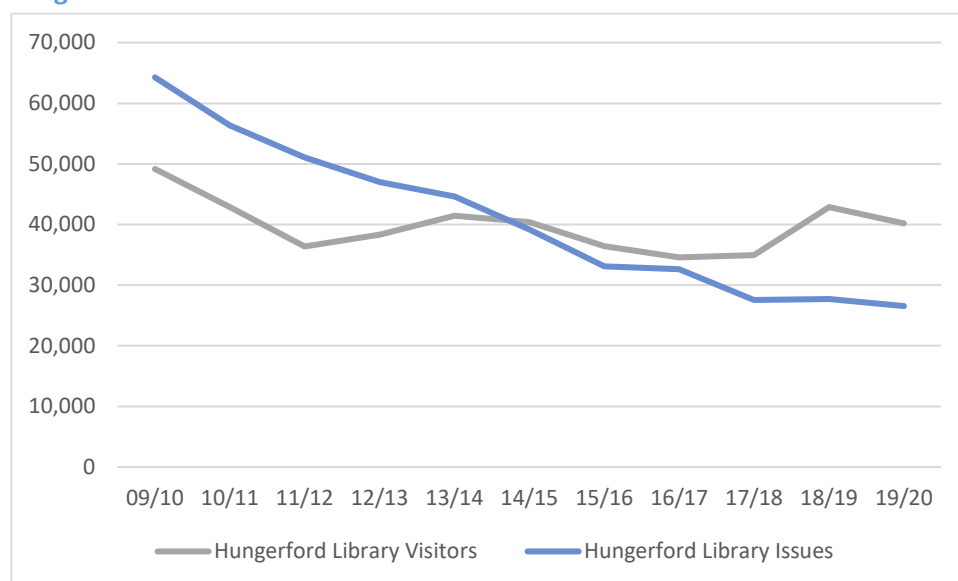
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends

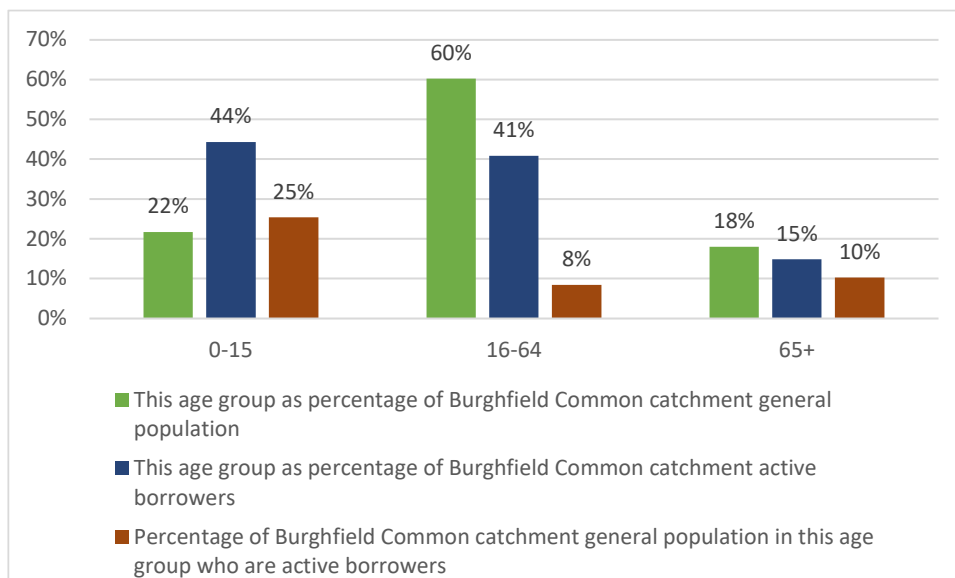Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 26%. This is slightly below average compared with the other libraries. Its issue rate for adults aged 20 to 69 has dropped less than other libraries – a drop of 9% compared with an average of 24%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

On overall decile rank, Hungerford shows as a more deprived library catchment area compared with others in West Berkshire. However, it is important to note that this is strongly influenced by the living environment domain and to an extent by the income domain. On the others, it ranks close to or above average.

IMD dimension	Hungerford Catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.5	8.1
Income	7.0	7.7
Employment	8.3	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.7	8.6
Crime	8.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.8	5.7
Living Environment	4.7	6.9

User age profile

Chart showing user age profile with three age groups (Age 0-15, Age 16-64, Age 65+) and three measures:

Age group	This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment general population	This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment active borrowers	Percentage of Hungerford catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers
Age 0-15	18%	37%	23%
Age 16-64	58%	39%	8%
Age 65+	24%	24%	11%

■ This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment general population

■ This age group as percentage of Hungerford catchment active borrowers

■ Percentage of Hungerford catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Lambourn

Catchment map

Library building

The library is centrally located in the main high street as part of a block housing two shops and four residential flats above. It is leased on a long-term basis at a peppercorn rent.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
4,245	489	11,085	9,501

Of the 489 active borrowers, 296 only borrowed items from Lambourn library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (55).

The library is open 15.5 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays, which is the day on which it is open for longest. Its busiest time for loans on a Friday is between 11am and 12pm and on a Saturday is also between 11am and 12pm.

Long-term trends
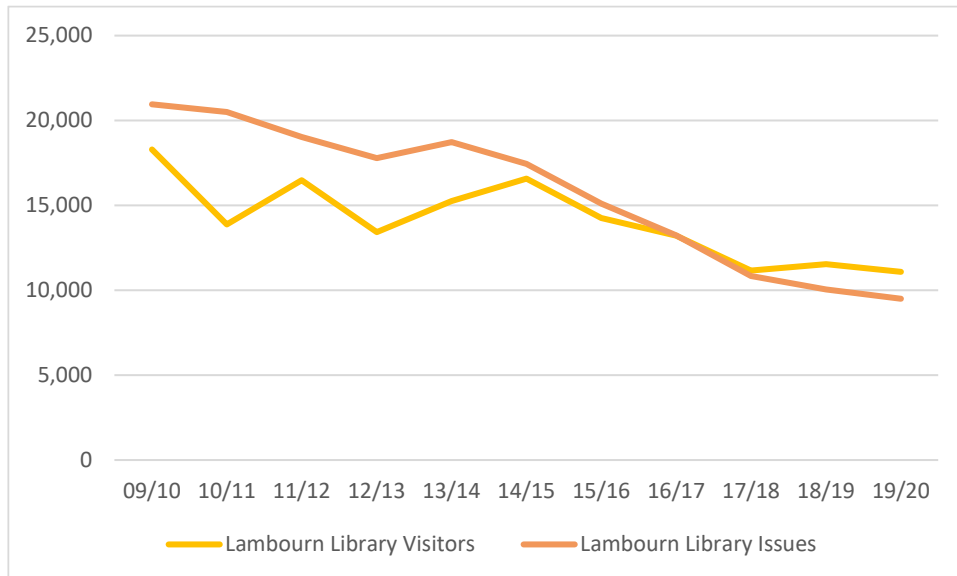
Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 40%. This is above average compared with the other libraries. The drop for the age group 11 to 19 has been noticeably sharp at 78%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Lambourn library catchment area ranks as the most deprived on all IMD domains except living environment.

IMD dimension	Lambourn catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	6.3	8.1
Income	5.7	7.7
Employment	7.3	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	3.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	7.7	8.6
Crime	5.7	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	4.0	5.7
Living Environment	5.7	6.9

User age profile

Legend:
- This age group as percentage of Lambourn catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Lambourn catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Lambourn catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	% of population who are active borrowers
Age 0-15	18%	40%	23%
Age 16-64	60%	36%	6%
Age 65+	21%	25%	12%

Mortimer

Catchment map
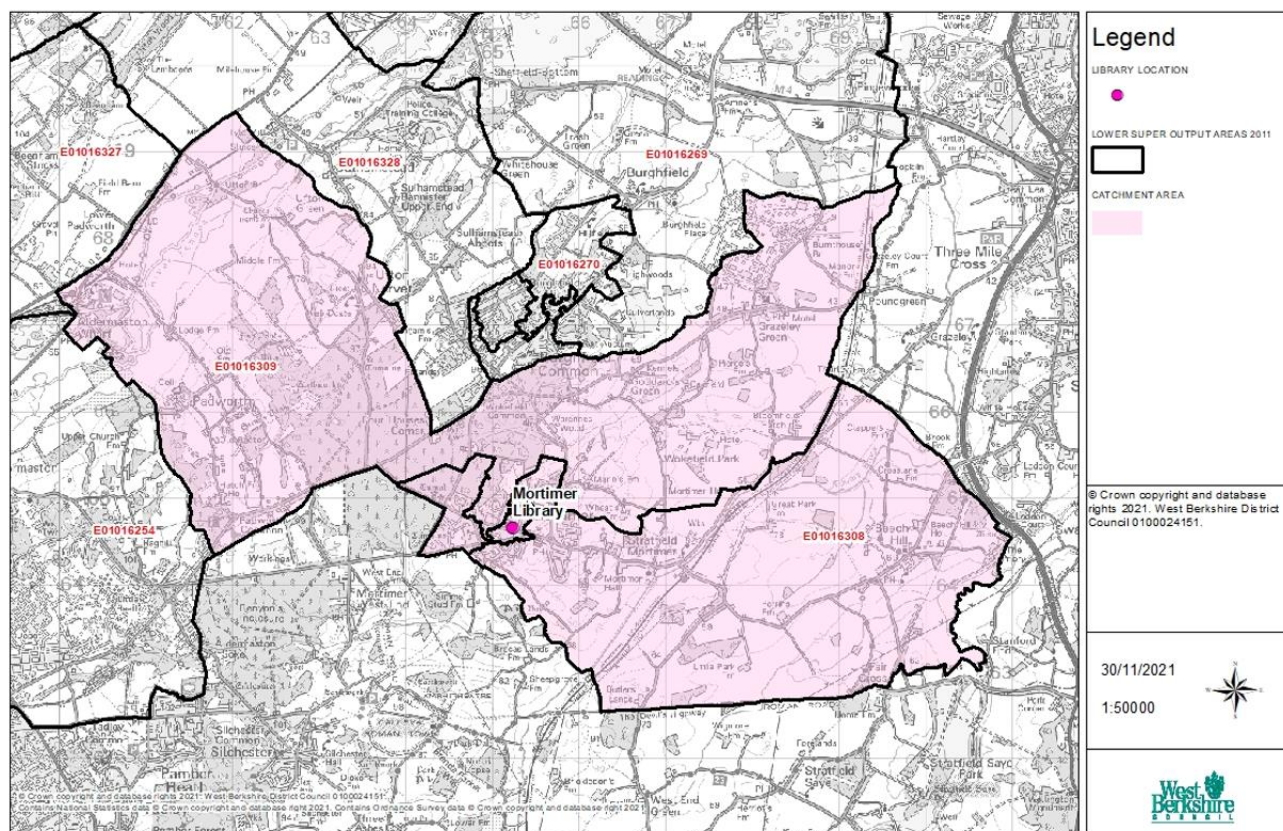
Library building

The library building was completely re-furbished in 2016, and is in a central location in the village. There is a covenant on the building stating that it must always be used as a library.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council leases the conservatory at the rear of the building. There have been discussions about the Parish Council taking over the management and lease for the whole building, but negotiations have recently been paused because of the pandemic.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
5,816	579	12,876	12,469

Of the 579 active borrowers, 299 only borrowed items from Mortimer library. The most popular alternative location was Burghfield Common (109). It is also likely that some residents use Reading Library Services.

The library is open 19 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. Its busiest time for loans is between 2pm and 4pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
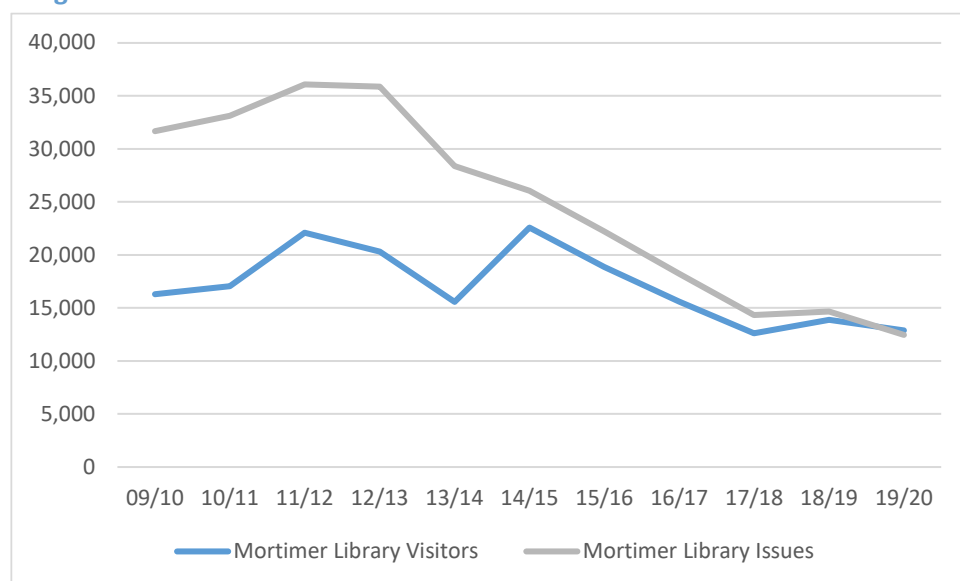
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends
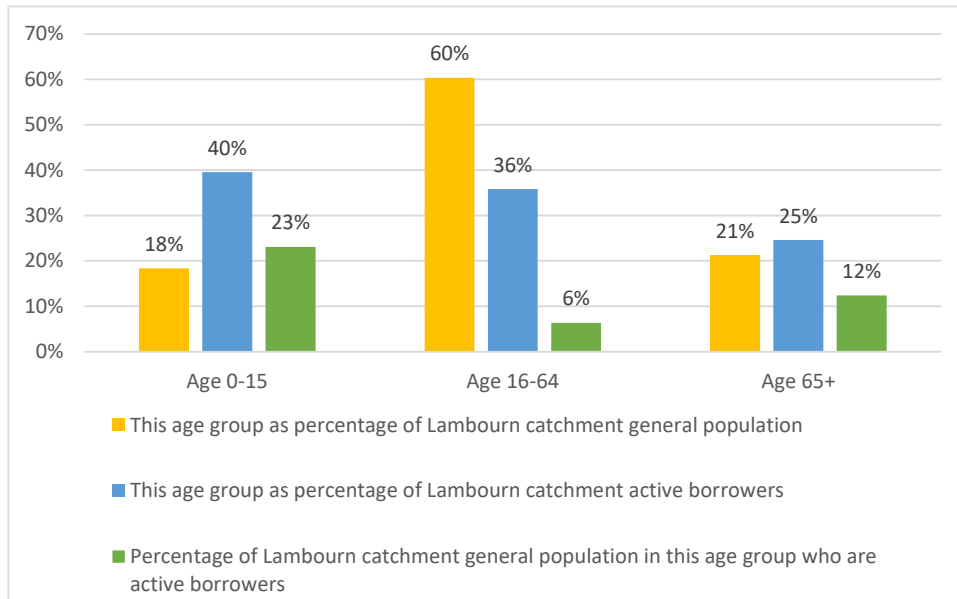
Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 29%. This is very slightly above average compared with the other libraries. The drop for the age group 11 to 19 has been noticeably sharp at 79%.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

On overall decile rank, Mortimer ranks as the third most deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is below the district average on most dimensions, but performs noticeably better on education, skills and training.

IMD dimension	Mortimer catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.7	8.1
Income	7.3	7.7
Employment	7.7	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.7	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.3	8.6
Crime	6.7	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.0	5.7
Living Environment	3.7	6.9

User age profile

Chart data:

	Age 0-15	Age 16-64	Age 65+
This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment general population	20%	58%	21%
This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment active borrowers	31%	41%	28%
Percentage of Mortimer catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers	15%	7%	12%

■ This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment general population

■ This age group as percentage of Mortimer catchment active borrowers

■ Percentage of Mortimer catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Newbury

Catchment map

Library building

A purpose-built library now 20 years old which is one of WBCs flagship buildings and located centrally in the Wharf area of the town centre. WBC has made significant investment in the building, most recently installing energy efficient LED lighting.

There may be a possibility to extend in line with Newbury Masterplan and Cultural Heritage Strategy to include, for example, a makerspace or space for small and medium sized businesses to rent.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
63,597	8,816	171,119	170,458

Of the 8,816 active borrowers, 3,768 only borrowed items from Newbury library. The most popular alternative location was Thatcham (801).

The library is open 47 hours a week and is busiest on Saturdays. Its peak time for loans is between 11am and 12pm on most days though it remains busy well into the afternoons.

Long-term trends

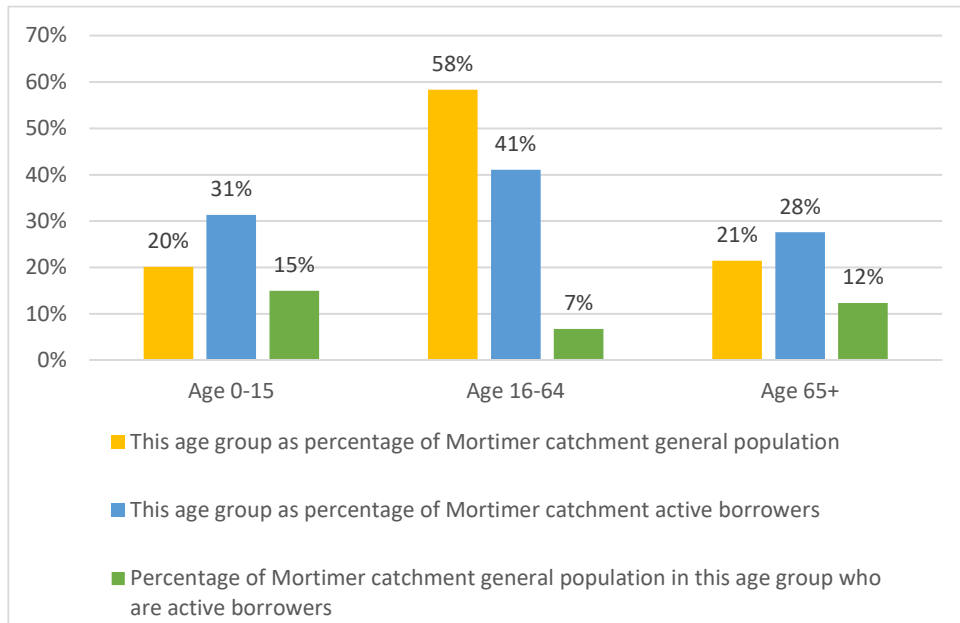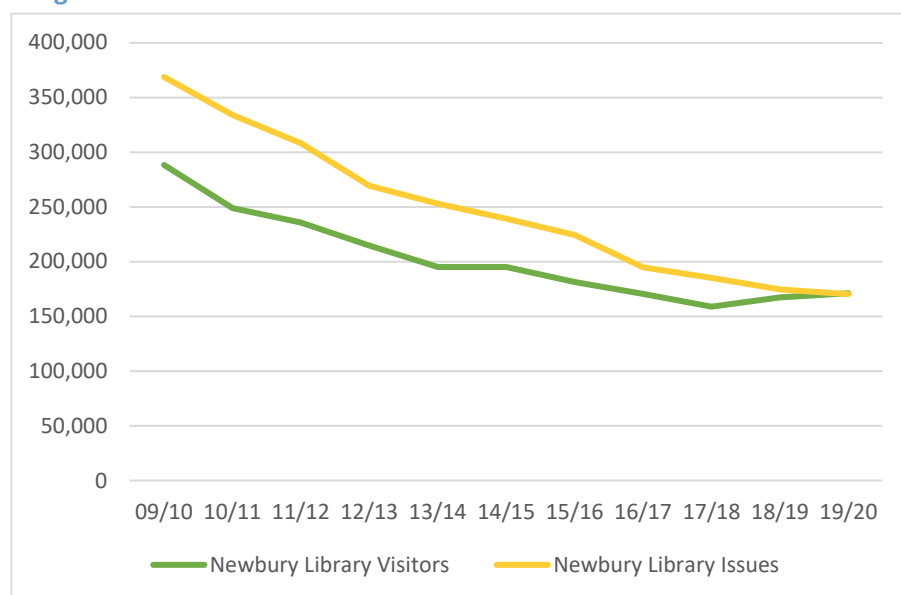Legend: — Newbury Library Visitors — Newbury Library Issues

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 34%. This is slightly above average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have remained stable.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Newbury catchment is close to the West Berkshire average on all domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. As the catchment covers more than a third of all the LSOAs this is to be expected.

IMD dimension	Newbury catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.9	8.1
Income	7.7	7.7
Employment	7.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.0	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.6	8.6
Crime	7.8	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	5.3	5.7
Living Environment	6.0	6.9

User age profile

Chart: Bar chart showing user age profile across three age groups (0-15, 16-64, 65+).

- 0-15: 20%, 38%, 23%
- 16-64: 61%, 47%, 10%
- 65+: 19%, 15%, 10%

Legend:
- This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Newbury catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Newbury catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Pangbourne
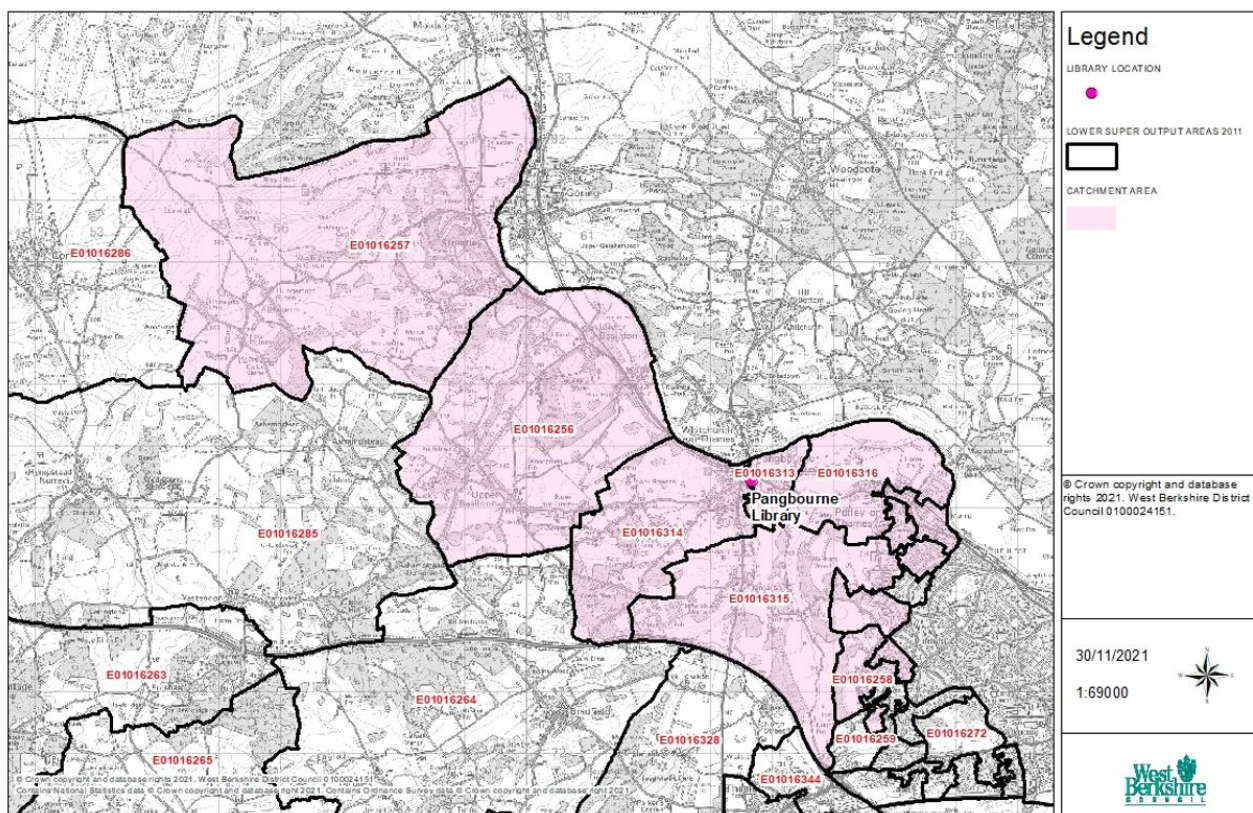
Catchment map

Library building

The library is a small building which was a former fire station. It is a good location in the centre of the village.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
18,751	1,085	19,388	21,241

Of the 1,085 active borrowers, 620 only borrowed items from Pangbourne library. The most popular alternative locations were Newbury (71) and Theale (69).

Pangbourne has the lowest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This may reflect its relative proximity to Caversham and Reading Central libraries, and Goring, in the neighbouring local authority areas.

The library is open 22 hours a week. Its busiest day is Friday and it is busiest on most weekdays between 11am and 12pm and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays. On Mondays, it is only open in the afternoon and is busiest between 3pm and 4pm.

Long-term trends
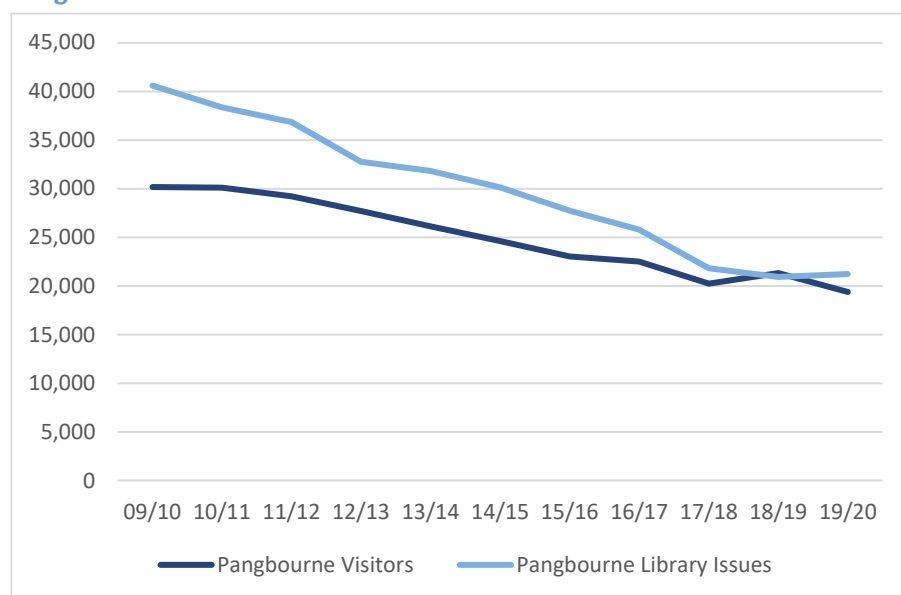
Covid-19 related trends

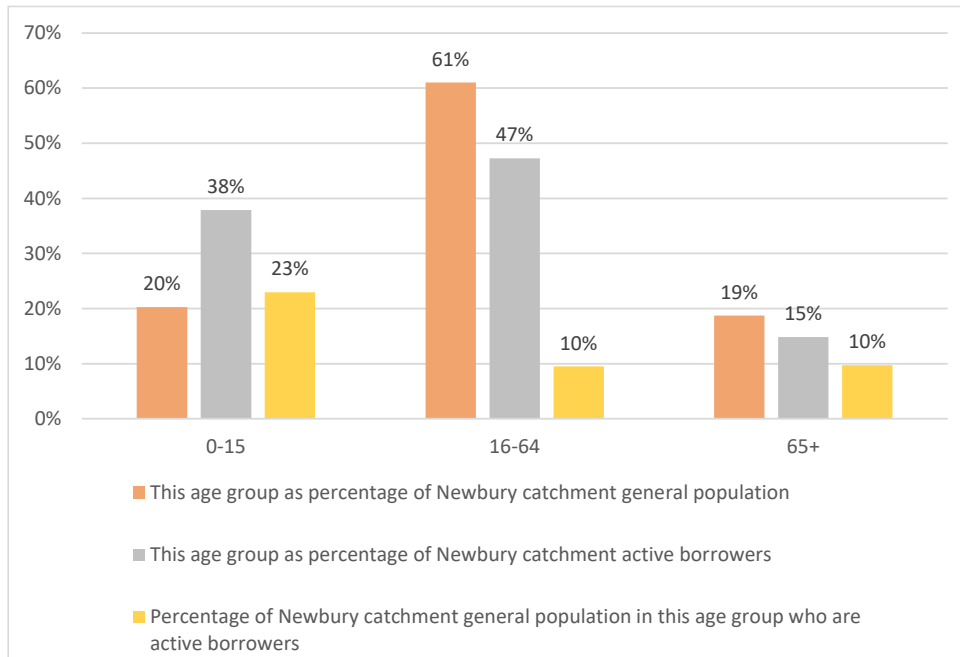Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows a drop over the period of 22%. This is below average compared with the other libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 10% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

Pangbourne library catchment ranks as the least deprived library catchment area in West Berkshire overall on the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is above average on all dimensions.

IMD dimension	Pangbourne catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	9.4	8.1
Income	9.0	7.7
Employment	8.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	7.9	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	9.4	8.6
Crime	9.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.6	5.7
Living Environment	8.3	6.9

User age profile

Chart legend:
- ■ This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population
- ■ This age group as percentage of Pangbourne catchment active borrowers
- ■ Percentage of Pangbourne catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	Active borrowers within age group
Age 0-15	19%	42%	11%
Age 16-64	59%	38%	3%
Age 65+	22%	20%	5%

Thatcham

Catchment map

Library building

The library was purpose built in the 1980s, but is now inadequate for a town the size of Thatcham where the population has rapidly increased. The location is slightly out of town and limited signage means that the building is hard to find as it is not on the main A4 and hidden behind a dental practice.

In 2021 a project commenced to make short term improvements to the building using capital funding. This involves the installation of an accessible toilet, and moving the entrance of the building to reduce anti-social behaviour.

In the longer term, the intention is to consider building a new larger facility as part of the Thatcham Masterplan and the need identified in the WBC Infrastructure Development Plan. This will provide an opportunity to consider co-location.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
28,307	2,403	41,021	45,745

Of the 2,403 active borrowers, 928 only borrowed items from Thatcham library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (801).

The library is open 33.5 hours a week and is busiest on Fridays. On most weekdays, its busiest time for loans is between 10am and 11am and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
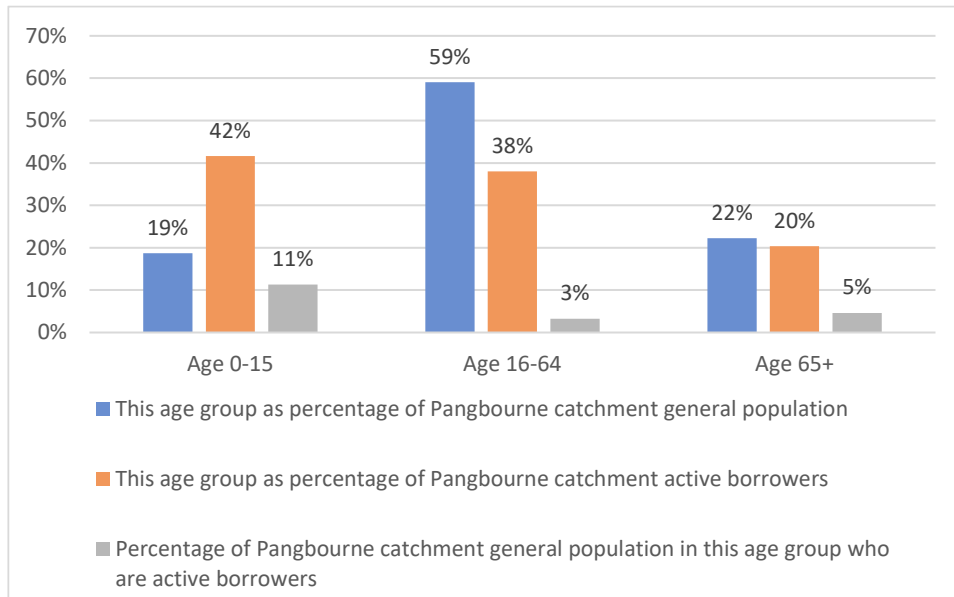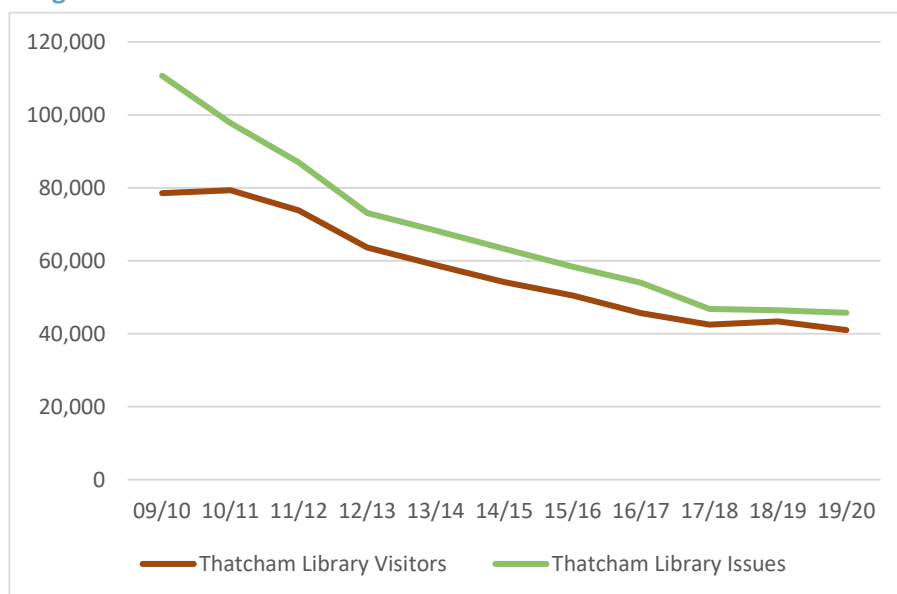
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends

Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 36%. This is slightly above average compared with the other libraries.

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

The Thatcham catchment is close to the average on most domains of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is well above average on living environment, and a little below on education, skills and training, health and employment.

IMD dimension	Burghfield Common catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	8.1	8.1
Income	7.5	7.7
Employment	7.6	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.4	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.3	8.6
Crime	8.2	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.3	5.7
Living Environment	8.2	6.9

User age profile

Chart legend:
- This age group as percentage of Thatcham catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Thatcham catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Thatcham catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	% of population who are active borrowers
0-15	20%	45%	18%
16-64	63%	39%	5%
65+	17%	16%	8%

Theale

Catchment map
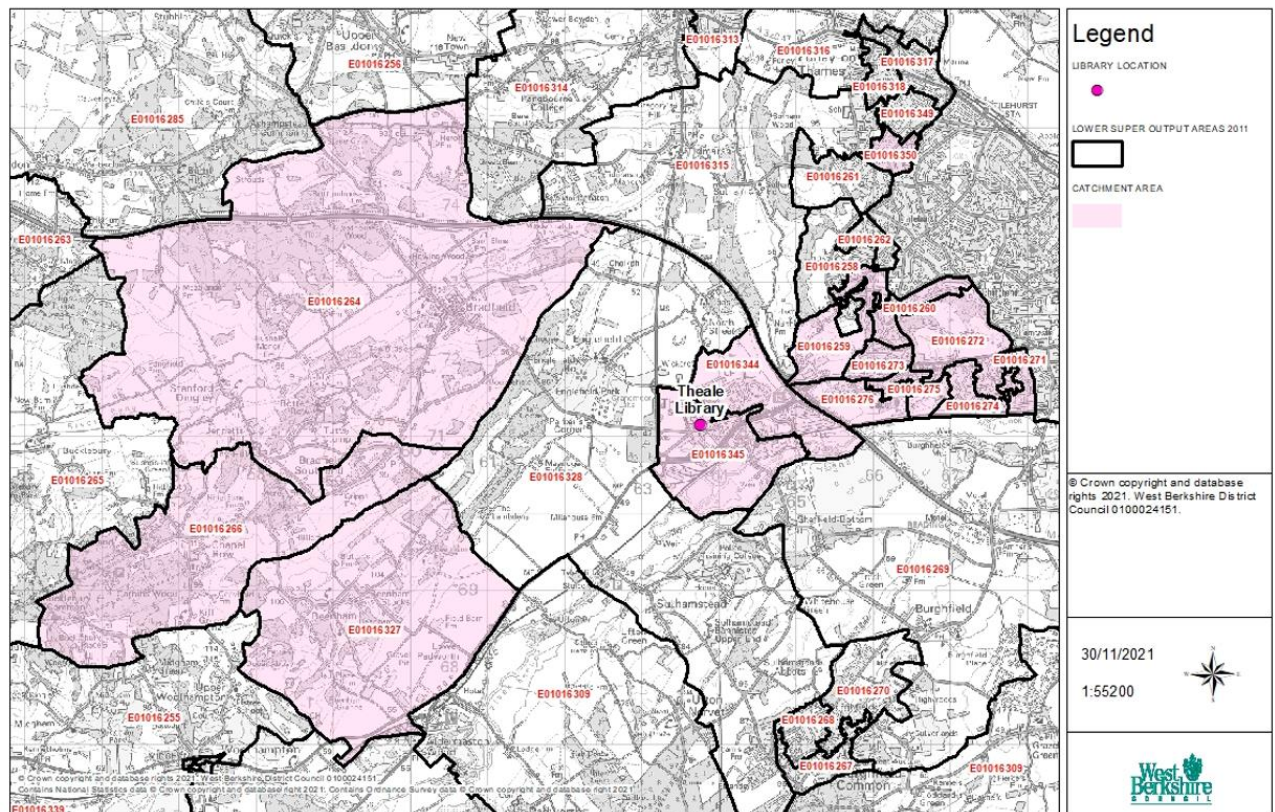
Library building

The library was a dual–use facility with Theale Green School until 2016 when the school withdrew from the agreement because of falling roll numbers. Initially there was a threat to the future of the library as the running costs for the building would have been too high just for the library.

To mitigate this, building alterations were made, and a suite of offices created in the part of the building formerly occupied by the school. These offices have been leased to the WBC Public Protection Partnership since 2017, therefore creating an additional income stream to make the current location sustainable.

Key data for 2019/20

Catchment population	Active borrowers	Visits	Issues
20,589	1,171	23,562	21,504

Of the 1,171 active borrowers, 477 only borrowed items from Theale library. The most popular alternative location was Newbury (123).

Theale has the second lowest percentage of active borrowers per catchment population. This may reflect its relative proximity to Reading Central and Caversham libraries, which are part of Reading Library Services.

The library is open 23.5 hours a week and is busiest on Wednesdays. Its busiest time for loans is between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays and between 11am and 12pm on Saturdays.
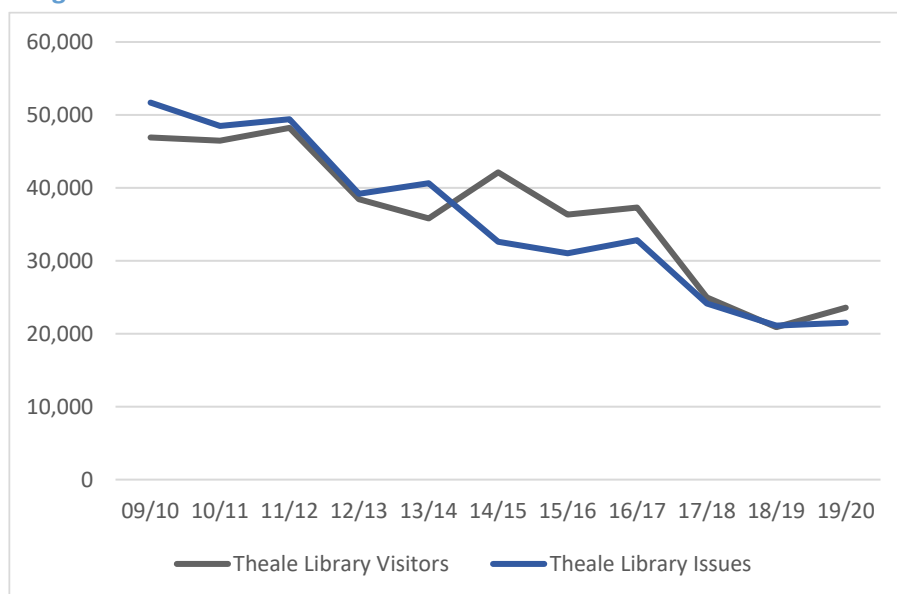
Long-term trends

Covid-19 related trends
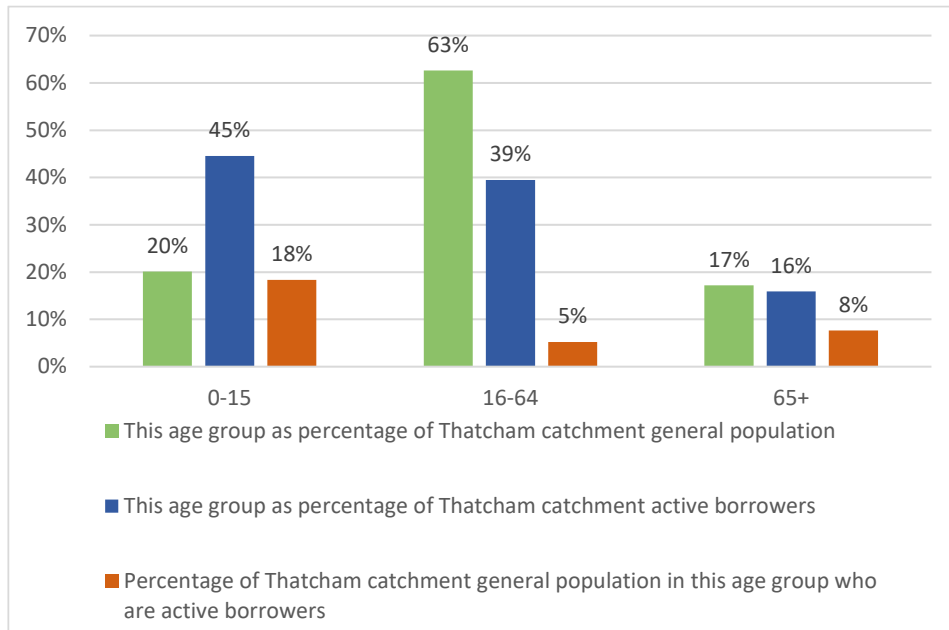
Comparing issue data from April 2019 to October 2019 with April 2021 to October 2021 shows an a drop over the period of 16%. This is the lowest of all the libraries. Issues to children aged 0 to 10 have risen by 25% (it is one of four libraries to show an increase for this group).

Socio economic profile, based on IMD

Theale library catchment is close the average on most of the Index of Multiple Deprivation domains. It is noticeably below average on education, skills and training and barriers to housing and services.

IMD dimension	Theale catchment decile	West Berks average decile
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	7.9	8.1
Income	7.7	7.7
Employment	7.9	8.0
Education, Skills and Training	6.0	6.8
Health Deprivation and Disability	8.6	8.6
Crime	7.8	7.9
Barriers to Housing and Services	4.9	5.7
Living Environment	8.1	6.9

User age profile

Legend:
- This age group as percentage of Theale catchment general population
- This age group as percentage of Theale catchment active borrowers
- Percentage of Theale catchment general population in this age group who are active borrowers

Age group	General population	Active borrowers	Population who are active borrowers
Age 0-15	20%	48%	13%
Age 16-64	61%	39%	3%
Age 65+	19%	13%	4%

Appendix II – library catchments

The table below shows for each LSOA the percentage of active borrowers using its most used library. This determines which catchment each LSOA falls into.

LSOA	Most used library by LSOA residents	% active borrowers using most used library
E01016270	Burghfield Common	89.7
E01016267	Burghfield Common	85.1
E01016268	Burghfield Common	83.0
E01016269	Burghfield Common	82.9
E01016328	Burghfield Common	64.4
E01016298	Hungerford	87.0
E01016299	Hungerford	86.2
E01016296	Hungerford	81.3
E01016297	Hungerford	81.1
E01016300	Hungerford	50.5
E01016301	Hungerford	49.5
E01016306	Lambourn	91.9
E01016305	Lambourn	83.7
E01016304	Lambourn	74.8
E01016307	Mortimer	83.9
E01016308	Mortimer	76.8
E01016309	Mortimer	50.0
E01016320	Newbury	99.5
E01016346	Newbury	99.3
E01016288	Newbury	99.2
E01016312	Newbury	98.5
E01016289	Newbury	98.4
E01016311	Newbury	98.4
E01016319	Newbury	98.3
E01016322	Newbury	98.1
E01016291	Newbury	97.8
E01016294	Newbury	97.7
E01016310	Newbury	97.7
E01016290	Newbury	97.7
E01016292	Newbury	97.2
E01016293	Newbury	96.5
E01016325	Newbury	96.4
E01016347	Newbury	96.3
E01016321	Newbury	95.7
E01016348	Newbury	95.7
E01016279	Newbury	94.7
E01016323	Newbury	94.2
E01016324	Newbury	92.2
E01016287	Newbury	91.9
E01016326	Newbury	91.1
E01016281	Newbury	91.0
E01016295	Newbury	89.7
E01016280	Newbury	89.0
E01016277	Newbury	87.2
E01016282	Newbury	82.4
E01016286	Newbury	81.5
E01016278	Newbury	80.3
E01016302	Newbury	80.0

LSOA	Most used library by LSOA residents	% active borrowers using most used library
E01016263	Newbury	78.7
E01016285	Newbury	75.5
E01016283	Newbury	55.6
E01016284	Newbury	51.4
E01016303	Newbury	44.1
E01016255	Newbury	41.9
E01016313	Pangbourne	94.4
E01016314	Pangbourne	91.7
E01016318	Pangbourne	85.3
E01016256	Pangbourne	82.4
E01016316	Pangbourne	79.7
E01016317	Pangbourne	76.7
E01016349	Pangbourne	70.6
E01016315	Pangbourne	59.2
E01016258	Pangbourne	50.0
E01016257	Pangbourne	50.0
E01016261	Pangbourne	44.4
E01016262	Pangbourne	38.5
E01016332	Thatcham	77.2
E01016331	Thatcham	73.6
E01016335	Thatcham	69.1
E01016336	Thatcham	66.7
E01016329	Thatcham	66.7
E01016334	Thatcham	65.7
E01016330	Thatcham	64.6
E01016337	Thatcham	62.9
E01016343	Thatcham	61.8
E01016333	Thatcham	60.5
E01016340	Thatcham	59.9
E01016342	Thatcham	58.5
E01016338	Thatcham	56.9
E01016341	Thatcham	55.4
E01016339	Thatcham	52.1
E01016265	Thatcham	45.1
E01016254	Thatcham	37.3
E01016275	Theale	91.7
E01016276	Theale	90.9
E01016345	Theale	90.8
E01016344	Theale	90.8
E01016273	Theale	87.5
E01016274	Theale	81.0
E01016260	Theale	76.2
E01016272	Theale	75.9
E01016264	Theale	56.3
E01016271	Theale	54.5
E01016327	Theale	52.8
E01016350	Theale	52.4
E01016259	Theale	46.7
E01016266	Theale	38.1

Appendix III – IMD averages by catchment

The table below shows the average IMD decile ranks and scores for the LSOAs in each library catchment.

Library catchment	Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019)		Income		Employment		Education Skills and Training		Health Deprivation and Disability		Crime		Barriers to Housing and Services		Living Environment	
	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score	Decile	Score
Burghfield Common	8.40	8.14	8.20	0.06	8.60	0.04	7.60	10.10	8.00	-0.69	7.40	-0.54	6.60	17.75	7.60	11.60
Hungerford	7.50	10.89	7.00	0.07	8.33	0.05	6.67	14.04	8.67	-0.92	8.17	-0.67	6.83	17.99	4.67	26.38
Lambourn	6.33	15.70	5.67	0.09	7.33	0.06	3.67	28.09	7.67	-0.58	5.67	-0.09	4.00	25.87	5.67	18.71
Mortimer	7.67	11.25	7.33	0.07	7.67	0.06	7.67	7.64	8.33	-0.82	6.67	-0.26	6.00	21.20	3.67	27.11
Newbury	7.92	10.68	7.73	0.06	7.89	0.05	6.97	13.15	8.65	-0.92	7.76	-0.66	5.30	22.79	6.00	19.02
Pangbourne	9.42	5.51	9.00	0.04	8.92	0.04	7.92	8.26	9.42	-1.19	9.17	-1.03	6.58	17.11	8.25	9.22
Thatcham	8.06	9.68	7.47	0.07	7.59	0.06	6.35	15.07	8.29	-0.77	8.18	-0.68	6.29	18.49	8.24	9.35
Theale	7.93	10.47	7.71	0.06	7.86	0.06	6.00	16.01	8.57	-0.85	7.79	-0.70	4.86	23.59	8.07	10.79
West Berkshire Average	8.07	9.89	7.74	0.06	8.00	0.05	6.77	13.48	8.60	-0.89	7.92	-0.68	5.71	20.94	6.89	15.24
Northern (illustrative)	7.86	10.84	8.86	0.04	9.43	0.04	8.29	7.24	9.71	-1.31	7.71	-0.55	2.86	33.98	3.71	30.83

* Notes
Decile rank (1 is most deprived)
Score (higher numbers indicate more deprivation)

Three Tuns House
109 Borough High Street
SE1 1NL

020 7756 7600

www.sharedintelligence.net
solutions@sharedintelligence.net