Wirral Libraries Needs Assessment

Wirral Council

December 2021

Wirral Libraries Needs Assessment

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Content overview

Abstract	The needs assessment has been undertaken to inform the future direction of the library service for Wirral, and the need to continue to provide a service that is compliant with statutory obligations, focusing on local need, whilst delivered in resources available. The library service is run and managed by the Local Authority and is provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has produced guidance for councils to refer to when considering library service provision and states that a comprehensive and efficient service will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. This must be done: • in consultation with their communities • through analysis of evidence around local needs • in accordance with their statutory duty This needs assessment will therefore form part of the process that will inform service redesign and delivery in respect of local need and strategic priorities, whilst continuing to meet statutory obligations.

Intended or potential audience	**External** • General Public • Library Service stakeholders • MPs for the four Wirral Constituencies • DCMS (Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) **Internal** • Councillors • Departmental Management Team (DMT) • Service Leads • Staff

	• Internal stakeholders
Links with other topic areas	• Children and Young People • Adults • Literacy • Information • Digital • Culture • Health and Wellbeing

Key findings

- Wirral has a population of 324,336 as of 2020, with a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of working age people compared to England

- The population is projected to increase by 1.6% overall by 2039 to 328,500

- The population of children and young people is projected to decrease by 7.2% by 2038 to 52,900

- The number of residents aged over 65 years is expected to increase by around 32% to 92,300 by 2038

- Birkenhead & Tranmere ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth for males (72.8), whilst Greasby, Frankby & Irby has the highest (83.5). For females, Rock Ferry ward has the lowest life expectancy (76.5) whilst Wallasey has the highest (87.7)

- 110,000 people, or just over 35% of Wirral's population are living in the top 20% deprived areas in England

- 36.6% of the working age population in Birkenhead & Tranmere compared to 6.0% in Heswall claim working age benefit

- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards account for 41% of children living in low-income families

- 28% of Wirral households have no access to a car

Literacy (Reading)
- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry wards have the lowest achievement of expected Early Learning goals

- A higher proportion of key stage 4 children in schools in the south and west Wirral achieve the attainment 8 measure compared to those children in the less affluent north and east ward areas

- In 2020, 6.6% of the working age population in Wirral had no qualifications

Digital (Information and Digital)
- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards are at greatest risk of digital exclusion when using the Digital Exclusion Index (DERI)
- Birkenhead constituency has 28.4% of its population classified as e-Withdrawn, compared to just 2.3% in Wirral South
- Most businesses in Wirral (88.65%) were classified as micro enterprises (1-9 employees) with the second highest being small enterprises (10-49 employees) (9.53%) as of 2017

Community (Creativity and Culture)
- Wirral (96) scores a higher level of need than England (68) in relation to the Community Need Index
- Moreton West & Saughall Massie, New Brighton, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards experience the lowest levels of participation in community life and are areas of poorer community and civic infrastructure with respect to the Community Need Index

Health and Wellbeing
- Overall, 22% of the population reported that their day-to-day activities were limited in some way by an illness or disability in the 2011 Census, but this hides large variations by age (from just 7% in those aged <35 to 83% of those aged 85+)
- Over 7000 people in Wirral are estimated to be diagnosed with dementia by 2035
- The prevalence of depression is much higher in Wirral than England, with 18% of adults compared to 11% nationally (according to GP records)
- Wirral has a higher percentage (3.6%) of people receiving IB/ESA than the national average (2.1%) as of 2021. Wards showing the highest numbers of claimants are Birkenhead & Tranmere (818) and Bidston & St James (506)
- Nationally, 43% of adults do not understand written health information

Library
- The number of libraries per 100,000 population for Wirral (7), is above the national average (5)
- The net expenditure (£14935) per 1000 population for Wirral is significantly higher than national (£11040) and group comparators (£11913)
- Footfall decreased by 376,557 visits over a five-year period (2015-2020), representing a decrease of 28.7%
- Since 2012 there has been an 87.9% decline in the number of active borrowers

- The largest group of active borrowers is 60+ (36.6%), followed by 0–12 (32.4%), with the least number of active borrowers in the 18-24 age category (1.4%) as of 2020

- Between 2012 and 2020 there has been a 52.7% decline in the number of loan transactions

- West Kirby (4826), Wallasey Central (4740), Bebington (4088) and Birkenhead (3532) libraries have the highest number of active borrowers, whilst Leasowe (221), Woodchurch (243), Beechwood (260) and St James (356) libraries have the lowest number as of 2020

- Leasowe (2637) and Beechwood (3772) libraries have the lowest number of issues/renewals per site, whilst Wallasey Central (127,955) and West Kirby (107,722) libraries have the highest as of 2020

- Since 2012 there has been a 2101% increase in the number of e-lending issues

- E-book usage is 3 times lower in more deprived areas, compared to the least deprived areas of Wirral

- The four central libraries (Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby), plus Moreton and Rock Ferry libraries have the highest number of PC and Wi-Fi logins of all Wirral Libraries as of 2019

- Wallasey Central and West Kirby libraries offers the highest number of activities and events that occur at least once a month in 2019. Higher Bebington, Woodchurch, Leasowe and Heswall have the least number of activities and events occurring at least once a month

Wirral JSNA: -   Wirral Libraries Need Assessment

Contents

What do we know?

Why is this important?

This needs assessment has been undertaken to inform the future direction of the library service for Wirral, and the need to continue to provide a service that is compliant with statutory obligations, focusing on local need and relevant socio-economic and demographic groups, whilst delivered in resources available.

Background

Over recent years Wirral's Library Service has been subject to several reviews and service changes, all aimed at delivering an integrated portfolio of services that better meet local needs.

The library service is run and managed by the Local Authority (Wirral Council) and is provided under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964[1]. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has produced guidance[2] for councils to refer to when considering library service provision and states that a "comprehensive and efficient" service will differ between councils and will depend on the needs of each area. This must be done:
- in consultation with their communities
- through analysis of evidence around local needs
- in accordance with their statutory duty

Local authorities should be able to demonstrate:
- plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including projections of need)
- consideration of a range of options (including alternative financing, governance, or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area
- a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals

In 2016 DCMS (via the Libraries Taskforce) published 'Libraries Delivered: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'[3]. It suggested that councils should develop their library services using 7 common design principles, so that they:
- meet legal requirements
- are shaped by local needs
- focus on public benefit and deliver a high-quality user experience
- make decisions informed by evidence, building on success
- support delivery of consistent England-wide core offers
- promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise
- use public funds effectively and efficiently

It states that, at local level, councils need to take a strategic, long-term approach to transforming their library service to strengthen their organisational and financial resilience. Decisions should

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[1] Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964
[2] Libraries as a statutory service
[3] Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021

be made based on an assessment of need, and actively managed with the community and library professionals, not carried out in an ad-hoc or reactive way.

What is a library service needs assessment?

A library service needs assessment is a process undertaken by a library service to learn about the needs of service users and non-users, and to evaluate how well they support these needs.

There is no standard agreed methodology for carrying out a library needs assessment. Monitoring other local authority assessments suggests there is considerable scope for councils to shape a library needs assessment according to local circumstances. This is confirmed by a letter from the Minister of State to the Leader of Sheffield City Council in March 2015[4] in which he wrote '[the Secretary of State] recognises that it is for SCC [Sheffield City Council], as the democratically accountable local representatives, to make the required value judgements with regard to the needs assessment for its library service and these are within the proper bounds of SCC's discretion'.

This document provides a needs assessment which takes into account the following evidence:
- national drivers, current thinking and best practice
- demographic and socio-economic data as indicators of need
- current library use and library location
- national benchmarking comparators
- intelligence from Council and commissioned engagement activity in Wirral

The needs assessment derives its finding from a body of evidence that includes:
- [Wirral Local Insight tool](#) for demographic profiles
- Talis Alto Library Management System for library user visitation behaviours
- Overdrive and Borrowbox for e-lending usage data
- Cisco Meraki for Wi-Fi usage data
- Insight Media i-CAM for PC usage data
- CIPFA Comparative Profile ([Public libraries comparative profiles | CIPFA](#))
- Responses from a public consultation survey from 28 June to 20 September 2021
- Wirral Borough Council: Re-Imagining Libraries, Leisure, Parks and Cultural Services. *Phase 2 Report*. ([BWB, October 2017](#))
- Achieving a sustainable library service for Wirral: results of an independent needs assessment ([Shared Intelligence, January 2017](#))

Therefore, the purpose of this needs assessment is to provide evidence and insight that can be used to develop a plan for the future of Wirral's library service. This plan will be aimed at ensuring that the service is able to meet the future needs of customers by delivering the right services at the right time and specifically ensuring that services are 'comprehensive and efficient', sustainable, provide value for money, and maximise impact in supporting the delivery of the Wirral Plan 2021-2026[5].

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[4] [DCMS PO Letter Template (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#)
[5] [Draft Wirral Delivery Plan 2021-26](#)

Scene setting

Statutory Duty

The Libraries and Museums Act 1964[6] requires local authorities to provide a public library service. The main obligation is to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service for all persons, for all those who live, work or study in the area, and to encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service and to lend books and other written materials free of charge. However, the meaning of 'comprehensive and efficient' are not defined. Guidance produced for councils by DCMS states[7] what a 'comprehensive and efficient' service means to each local authority will depend on the needs of each area and it is the role of councillors and officials at a local level to determine how they spend and manage the delivery of their service.

In her report following an inquiry into Wirral's proposed library closures in 2009, Sue Charteris[8] provided some clarity on the definition of 'comprehensive and efficient', by identifying the need for a library strategy based on an analysis and assessment of local needs.

More recent judicial reviews (non-Wirral) have also highlighted the need to take account of equalities implications of any proposed service changes. The requirement to demonstrate best value and adhere to procurement rules have also appeared in some judicial reviews. The government response to the report of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee (2013) [9] stated that a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service represents the balance between meeting local needs within the context of available resources in a way appropriate to the identified needs of the communities they serve. Additionally, a Ministerial letter[10] quoting relevant High Court judgements in 2011 and 2014 stated that the meaning of 'comprehensive and efficient' is to be interpreted in the context of the best use of assets within constraints of available resources and that a comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library.

The guidance provided by DCMS, and the lessons learnt from the Charteris report and the subsequent judicial reviews into other library authorities' proposals for change have been taken into account as part of this service review. We will also have regard to wider legal obligations and a separate, detailed Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) will be available.

National context

Libraries Connected Universal Library Offers

In 2013 the Society of Chief Librarians and partners including, The Arts Council and The Reading Agency, made a commitment to keeping library services relevant and accessible. Together they identified six key areas of service which users regarded as integral to public libraries and developed a shared strategy for the future.

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[6] Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964
[7] Libraries as a statutory service
[8] A Local Inquiry into the Public Library Service Provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
[9] Government Response to the Report of the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee
[10] Ministerial letters regarding representations made about local library services

The Universal Offers covered the six key areas of service which customers and stakeholders see as essential to a 21st century library service. They are Health, Reading, Digital, Culture, Information and Learning.

The Universal Offers have been informed by customer research, tested with stakeholders and customers and developed in partnership with The Reading Agency and Arts Council England. The aim of each of the offers is to develop a core package of partnerships and resources which can then be delivered locally and shaped to meet differing local needs.

Libraries Connected as the sector support organisation for libraries, built on their previous work as the Society of Chief Librarians, and in 2018 Libraries Connected launched a review of their Universal Offers and a new refreshed Universal Library Offers framework (**figure 1**) was created in 2019, following an eight-month independent review.

Figure 1: Libraries Connected Universal Offer framework

Source: [Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected](#)

The revised offers were chosen to demonstrate the key areas and work public library services do to enrich the lives of individuals and their communities. The four offers are:

- **Reading**
Libraries support the growth of a literate, empathetic and confident society
- **Digital and Information**
Libraries provide quality information and support
- **Culture and Creativity**
Libraries work with cultural providers to spark curiosity, imagination and fun
- **Health and Wellbeing**
Libraries promote healthy living; provide self-management support and engagement opportunities for children and adults supported by welcoming spaces; effective signposting and information to reduce health, social and economic inequalities

The Universal Library Offers also aim to ensure that all aspects of the public library provision are accessible and therefore each offer is underpinned by the Vision and Print Impaired People's

Promise (developed by Share the Vision) and The Children's Promise (developed by The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians).

Libraries Taskforce Outcomes

In 2016 the national Libraries Taskforce published 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'[11], which set out the strategic vision and commitment to public libraries in England. The document acknowledged the challenging times councils face in running library services and called for councils to think and act differently.

The Library Taskforce describes libraries as a vital community hub, bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better. The report set out an ambition for everyone to:

- choose to use libraries, because they see clear benefits and positive outcomes from doing so
- understand what library services offer, and how they can make the most of what's available to them
- be introduced to new ideas and opportunities, then given confidence and quick and easy access to tools, skills and information they need to improve their quality of life
- receive trusted guidance through the evolving information landscape and build the skills needed to thrive in a changing world

The document identified 7 outcomes that library services contribute to that are critical to the individuals and communities in their areas, as illustrated in **figure 2**.

Figure 2: Libraries Taskforce: Libraries Deliver 7 outcomes

Source: Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021

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[11] Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021

These outcomes are consistent with the Society of Chief Librarians' (replaced by Libraries Connected in 2018) recommended Universal Offers as stated above.

Arts Council England

The Arts Council[12] does not have any statutory responsibility for libraries, however as agreed with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Arts Council's role is to develop and advocate for libraries. They also take particular interest in the ways that library spaces can be used to connect the public with other cultural activities and believe libraries contribute to the wider goals of both national and local government, as well as the communities they serve. They have set out four priority areas for development:
- Place the library as the hub of the community
- Make the most of digital technology and creative media
- Ensure that libraries are resilient and sustainable
- Deliver the right skills for those who work in libraries

Additionally, the 'English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group' is chaired by the Arts Council and it works closely with the DCMS to support it in its library superintendence role.

Local Context

Wirral Council set out a series of outcomes in its five-year plan, which the Council and its partners would work to achieve by 2025[13]. The focus of these outcomes were:
- A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations
- A sustainable Borough that is not only environmentally friendly but one which plays its part in urgently responding to the environment and climate crisis
- Brighter futures for our young people and families – regardless of their background or where they live
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families
- Services which help people live happy, healthy, independent and active lives, with public services there to support them when they need it

In October 2019 Wirral Council had unanimously agreed the Wirral Council Plan 2025. However, because of COVID-19, it was agreed this needed to be reviewed, in light of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Borough. The new plan [14] defines key thematic priorities for the Local Authority over the coming years, outlining those tasks which the Council will focus on to ensure the people of Wirral receive the services they need and want, based on what people said matters most to them. These thematic priorities are:
- Inclusive Economy
- Safe and Pleasant Communities
- Sustainable Environment
- Brighter Futures
- Active and Healthy Lives

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[12] Supporting libraries | Arts Council England
[13] Wirral Council Plan 2025
[14] Wirral Plan 2021-26

Library Service provision

Wirral Library Service currently comprises of 24 libraries, a Home Reader Service and online (virtual) library.

Service Provision pre-March 2020

Pre COVID-19 pandemic (until March 2020) service delivery consisted of 4 'central' libraries (Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby) with extended opening hours, two of which also provided a One Stop Shop (OSS) service, 4 'merged' library (Eastham, Heswall, Moreton and Rock Ferry) with OSS services, and 16 'community' libraries offering up to 18 hours of opening across the week.

The large central libraries offered a wide range of services including reference and ICT suites; all with self-contained rooms of varying numbers. Three with large floor spaces, and one with a smaller footprint and co-located with a Wirral Council leisure centre. Central libraries had a staffing budget provision of between 48 and 55 hours per week, whilst the four merged libraries staffing budget provision was 46 hours per week.

These community libraries varied in size, scale of services, and level of activities and events, with most delivered through standalone sites. As of mid-March 2020, 14 of the 16 community libraries had budget provision to be staffed and open for 18 hours[15] per week, but some had extended opening hours, through the use of volunteers who were able to deliver a 'library express' service, supported by RFID (self-service kiosks). In two areas (St James and Leasowe) the local Neighbourhood Trusts supported their local libraries with additional opening hours. St James library operated for an additional 4 hours a week, whilst Leasowe library an additional 32 hours per week.

All libraries offered a book lending service, public computers (PC) access, Wi-Fi and printing facilities. They also offered a basic 'triage' or signposting service to Council and partner services. The merged and two central libraries offered a One Stop Shop service for more complex enquiries via a booking system. All central libraries offered reference material, DVD hire and audio material[16], whilst Birkenhead Library had a large reference library with staffed provision. The service delivery was supported by volunteers in some ICT suites and Wallasey Central reference library, in addition to the forementioned 'library express' and Neighbourhood Trust volunteers within community libraries.

A Home Reader Service delivered reading material, audio and DVDs to residents in their homes, sheltered and residential settings. The service was managed by the library service supported by volunteers. This service provided for those individuals who were unable to visit a library.

An online (virtual) digital library service was available to library users for the loan of e-books and e-audio books and provided free access to several reference resources, which were available at each Wirral library and some via remote access.

Across the network of libraries, a full calendar of events and activities was delivered by library staff, volunteers, partner organisations and groups, with outreach delivery when appropriate. These events and activities were in the majority delivered within core staffed library hours or

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[15] Leasowe Library had staffing provision for 14 hrs (extended support provided by the Neighbourhood Trust)
[16] Birkenhead Central and Wallasey Central libraries provide music CDs

'library express' times. The number and purpose of these activities and events varied on a site-by-site basis and details are shown in **appendix 1**.

Service Provision since March 2020

Since March 2020 the library provision has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In late March 2020 all library sites closed as mandated by Central Government. The service provision was transferred to an online offer only, through the utilisation of social media channels and web-based platforms to support the delivery of events and activities and awareness of the service's digital library.

In August 2020 following the change in Government guidelines two central libraries (Birkenhead and West Kirby) reopened for an 'Order and Collect' service only, with the remaining two centrals Bebington and Wallasey following in December 2020. Following the third lockdown the four central libraries reopened, adding a browsing offer from May 2021.

From May to November 2021 a further eleven sites have reopened with a browsing offer and the resumption of IT facilities at all open sites and reference service at Birkenhead Central Library.

As of December 2021, the current offer is:
- four central libraries open six days a week 9-1 and 2-5 (42 hours a week)
- three libraries open three days a week 9-1 and 2-5 and alternate Saturday's 9-1 (21/25 hours a week)
- seven libraries open two days a week 9-1 and 2-5 and alternate Saturday's 9-1 (14/18 hours a week)
- one library open one day a week 9-1 and 2-5 and alternate Saturday's 9-1 (7/11 hours a week)

Additional sites are scheduled to reopen in the coming months.

As part of the remobilisation of the One Stop Shop service, they are now located in Wallasey Central Library one day per week, on an appointment only basis, with a view to resumption at other sites.

The Home Reader service paused in March 2020 and since April 2021 has started doorstep deliveries to residents in their homes, with some doorstep residential visits commencing in June 2021. Additional services are yet to restart.

With regards to library events and activities, Wirral Libraries are working towards reinstatement of these, taking into account advice from Asset Management, Public Health and Health and Safety colleagues, with regards to ventilation requirements which affects the numbers of attendees. Similarly, Wirral Libraries is keen to engage with our volunteers, that provided IT, Home Reader, Reference and 'library express' support, so they can return in a safe manner.

Strategic Context

Wirral Libraries draft Library Strategy is available as a separate document and has four strategic priorities that mirror the Libraries Connected Universal Offers of:
- Reading
- Information and Digital
- Culture and Creativity
- Health and Wellbeing

These four key strategic priorities were designed to ensure a modern library service which seeks to respond to the Wirral Plan, whilst also being informed by library service best practice and national frameworks.

The Wirral Plan[17] will underpin the future delivery of the library service and its four overarching strategic priorities, to ensure that the service can effectively contribute to the Council's five-year plan and support the achievement of its ambitions.

As seen in **table 1**, where the Universal Offers are cross referenced to the thematic priorities of the Wirral Plan, there is a close fit to how the library service offer can support the delivery of the Council's future plan.

Table 1: Libraries Connected Universal Offers/Wirral Council Plan priorities

'Libraries Connected Universal Offers	Wirral Council Plan thematic priorities that are supported by the Library Service
Reading	Brighter Futures Inclusive Economy Safe and Pleasant Communities
Information and Digital	Brighter Futures Inclusive Economy Sustainable Environment
Cultural and Creativity	Inclusive Economy Active and Health Lives Safe and Pleasant Communities
Health and Wellbeing	Active and Healthy Lives Brighter Futures Safe and Pleasant Communities

The "Libraries Deliver" National Taskforce outcomes strengthen the reasoning for the selection of the library service's overarching priorities, and **table 2** further demonstrates how the Council's future plans can be supported by cross referencing the Taskforce's Outcomes and the Wirral Plan's thematic priorities.

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[17] Wirral Plan 2021-26

Table 2: Taskforce Outcomes/Wirral Council Plan priorities

| 'Libraries Deliver' National Taskforce Outcomes	Wirral Council Plan thematic priorities that are supported by the Library Service
Cultural and creative enrichment	Inclusive Economy Active and Healthy Lives Safe and Pleasant Communities
Increased reading and literacy	Brighter futures Inclusive Economy Safe and Pleasant Communities
Improved digital access and literacy	Brighter Futures Inclusive Economy Sustainable Environment
Helping everyone achieve their full potential	Brighter Futures Inclusive Economy Active and Healthy Lives
Healthier and happier lives	Active and Healthy Lives Brighter Futures Safe and Pleasant Communities
Greater prosperity	Inclusive Economy Sustainable Environment
Stronger, more resilient communities	Safe and Pleasant communities Inclusive Economy Brighter Futures

Insight

Facts, figures and trends

Demographic Need of Wirral[18]

The current population of Wirral as of 2020 is 324,336[19], with a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of working age people compared to England.

The maps below (**maps 1 to 3**) show how the age of the population varies across the Borough, with a higher proportion of people aged 65+ living to the west, with higher proportions of younger people living in the east and central areas of Wirral.
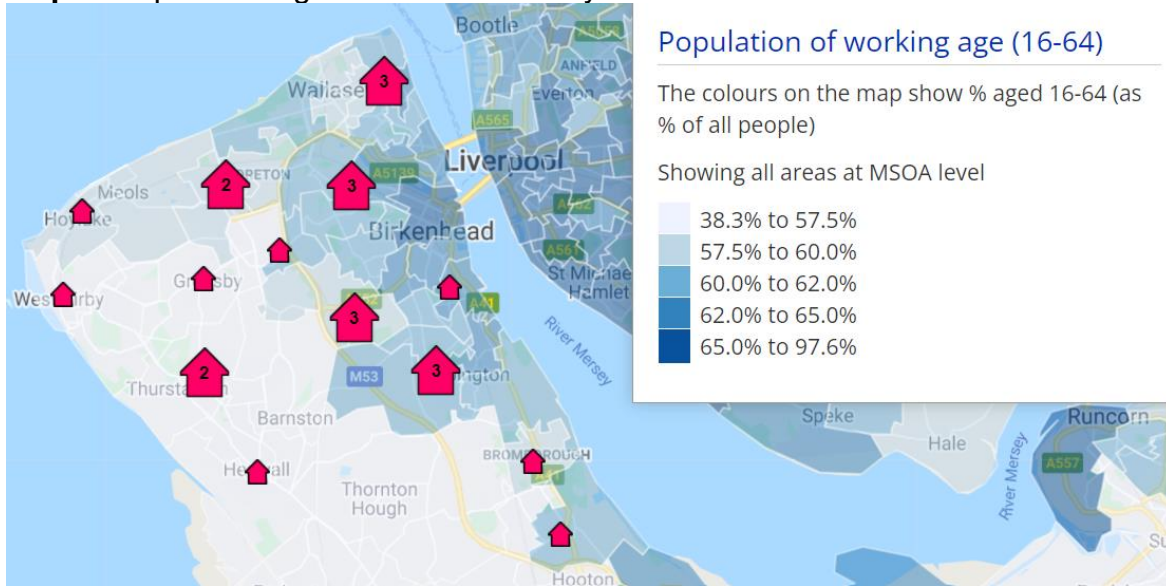
Map 1: Population aged 0-15 with library locations 2020
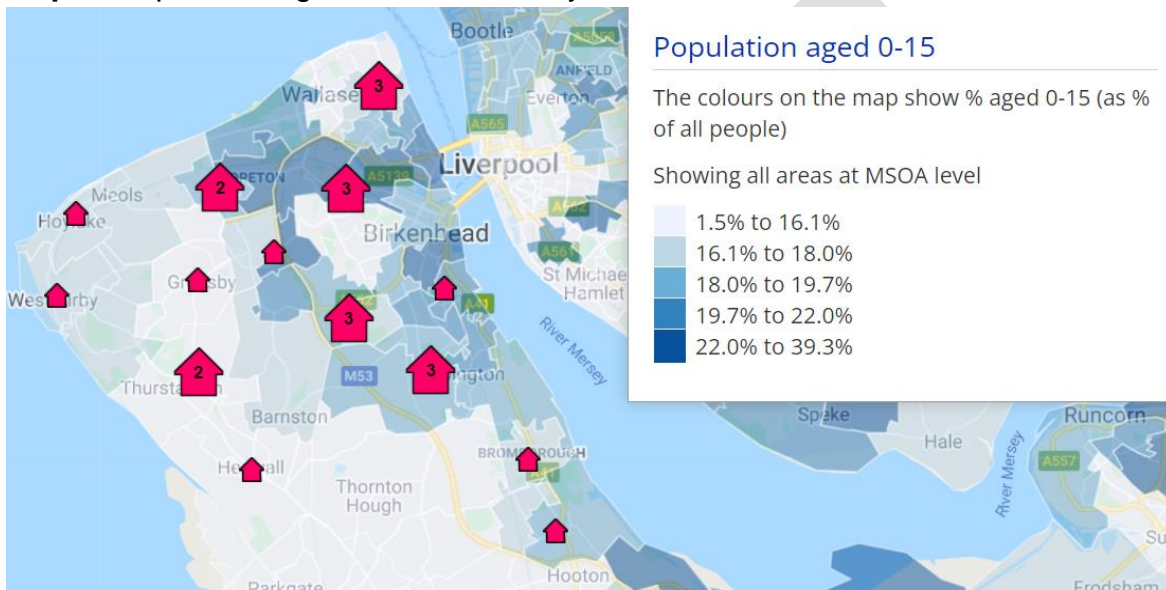
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Map 2: Population aged 16-64 with library locations 2020

Population of working age (16-64)

The colours on the map show % aged 16-64 (as % of all people)

Showing all areas at MSOA level

	38.3% to 57.5%
	57.5% to 60.0%
	60.0% to 62.0%
	62.0% to 65.0%
	65.0% to 97.6%

Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Map 3: Population aged 65+ with library locations 2020

Population aged 65+

The colours on the map show % aged 65+ (as % of all people)

Showing all areas at MSOA level

	0.4% to 12.8%
	12.8% to 17.1%
	17.1% to 20.9%
	20.9% to 25.1%
	25.1% to 53.7%
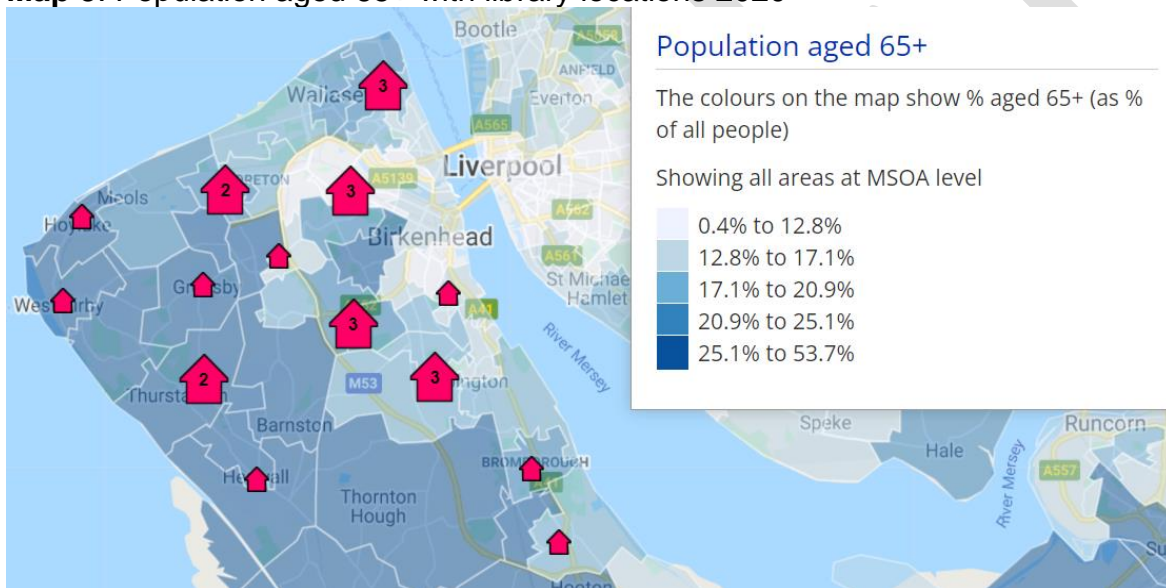
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

The population is projected to increase by 1.6% overall by 2039 according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), from 323,000 (2018) to 328,500[20]. The population of children and young people is projected to decrease by 7.2% (57,200 in 2018 to 52,900 in 2038). The number of residents aged over 65 years is expected to increase by around 32% by 2038 (69,700 in 2018 to 92,300 in 2038), alongside a 6% contraction in the 16 – 64 age group (195800 in 2018 to 183,100 in 2038)[21].

The number of births in Wirral as of 2020 was 2,958, the lowest number since Wirral was formed as a Metropolitan Borough in 1974; historical trends indicate these decreases could continue until the late 2020s (a 3% decrease by 2030 is predicted by ONS)[22].

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[20] Data from the Office for National statistics 2017 Mid-Year Estimates
[21] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[22] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)

In 2017-19, life expectancy at birth in Wirral was 78.5 years for males and 82.3 years for females (both increases on 2016-18) compared to 79.8 and 83.4 respectively in England. Life expectancy varies considerable in Wirral; with Wirral residents having some of the poorest health outcomes in the country. Within the Borough differences in life expectancy of 10.7 years for men and 11.2 years for women exist between the the most and least deprived wards in Wirral. Birkenhead & Tranmere had the ward with the lowest life expectancy at birth for males (72.8), whilst Greasby, Frankby & Irby had the highest (83.5). For females, Rock Ferry had the lowest life expectancy (76.5) whilst Wallasey had the highest (87.7)[23].

The 2011 census indicates that the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population makes up 5% (16,101) of Wirral's population, compared to 20.2% in England. The largest number of Black and Minority Ethnic group people in Wirral were living in Birkenhead & Tranmere ward (1727 in 2011)[24].

Since 2011, it is probable that Wirral's BAME population has continued to grow. An indicator of this is the annual School Census (2021), which showed that BAME pupils made up 7.9% of the overall Wirral school population[25]. The proportion of the school population with a first language other than English rose from 2.6% (1150) in 2013 to 3.9% (1795) in 2017[26].

There were an estimated 5000-5250 people in Wirral who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, with a further 50 people estimated to be transgender in the 2011 census[27].

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score, as shown in **map 4**, suggests that there is a significant gap between the most and least deprived wards in Wirral; with the most affluent ward being Heswall and the most deprived ward being Birkenhead & Tranmere, followed by Bidston & St James, Seacombe and Rock Ferry wards.

Map 4: Index of Multiple Deprivation with library locations 2019
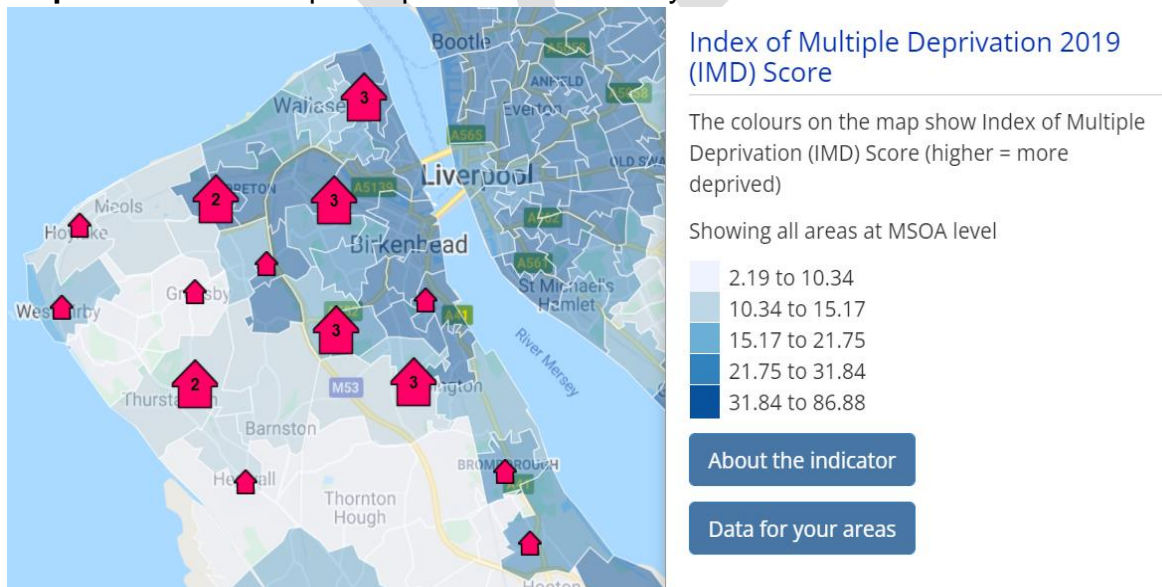
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

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[23] Life expectancy in Wirral 2017-19 (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[24] Date from the 2021 census will not be available until 2023, so for the purpose of this assessment 2011 census data will be used. 2011 Census
[25] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[26] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[27] Wirral Population - Wirral Intelligence Service

Of the approximate 325,000 Wirral residents, over 110,000 or just over 35% of the population are classified as living in the most deprived 20% of areas in England[28].

The four wards of Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry, and Seacombe, consistently featuring as the most disadvantaged wards when using indicators such as 'No Qualifications', 'Participation in Higher Education', 'Healthy Life Expectancy at Birth', 'Out of Work Benefit Claimants' and 'Net Household Income'[29].

For example, in total, there were 35,924 people claiming working age benefits in Wirral (as of February 2021), which is 18.6% of the working age population of Wirral (compared to the England average of 14.5%). As **Map 5** below shows, there are huge variations in Wirral, with a much higher percentage of benefit claimants in the east of Wirral (e.g. over one in three or 36.6% of the working age population in Birkenhead & Tranmere compared to one in 16 or 6.0% in Heswall)[30].

Map 5: Percentage of working age people receiving Department for Works and Pensions benefit with library locations 2021
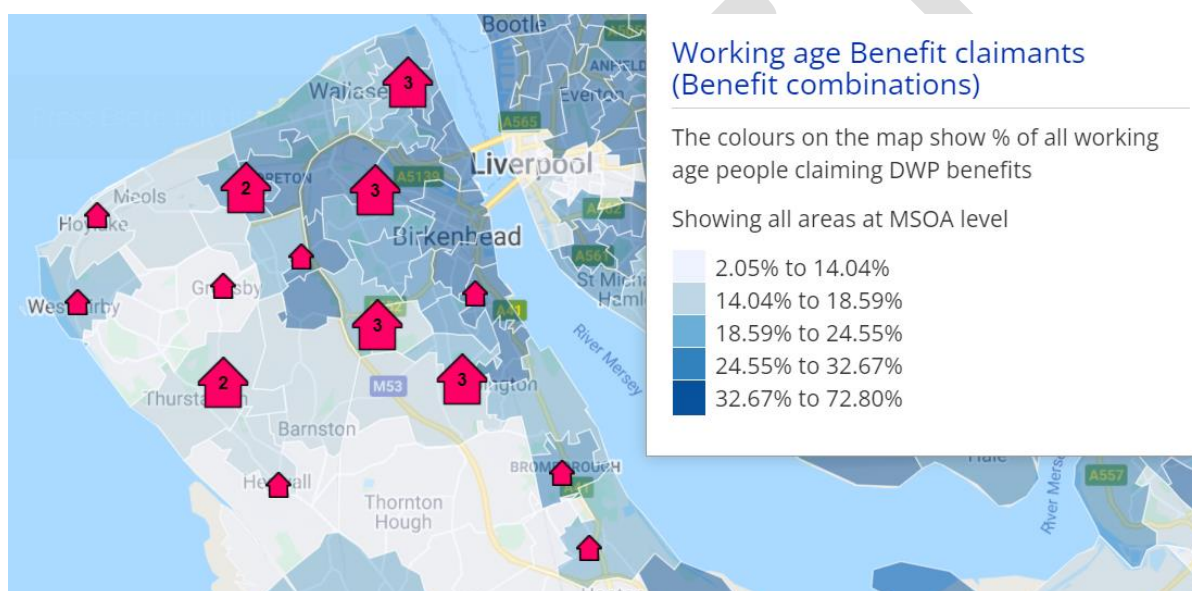
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Children and young people aged 0-19 make up just over one in five (22%) of Wirral residents (73,699 in 2020). The 2019 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index shows that deprivation affecting children is concentrated in the east of Wirral, with Birkenhead & Tranmere, Bidston & St James, Rock Ferry, Seacombe wards being the most deprived, with small pockets in other areas including Woodchurch, Acre Lane Bromborough, and Gilroy area of West Kirby[31].

Child poverty data shows the proportion of children living in low-income households (10,490 in 2019) ranged from 4% in Heswall, to 46% in Bidston & St James ward. With just four wards (Seacombe, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Bidston & St James, Rock Ferry) accounting for 41% of children living in low-income families across the Borough[32].

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[28] Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for Wirral 2019 (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[29] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[30] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[31] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[32] Annual report of the Director of Public Health for Wirral 2020-2021

Transport provides access to jobs, education, services, and recreational activities. There are clear links between transport and social exclusion. According to the 2011 Census [33], 28% of Wirral households had no access to a car; this differs across the Borough with as many as 54.9% of households in Birkenhead & Tranmere ward not having access to a car compared to just 10% of households in Heswall as shown in **map 6.**

Map 6: Percentage of households with no car with library locations 2011
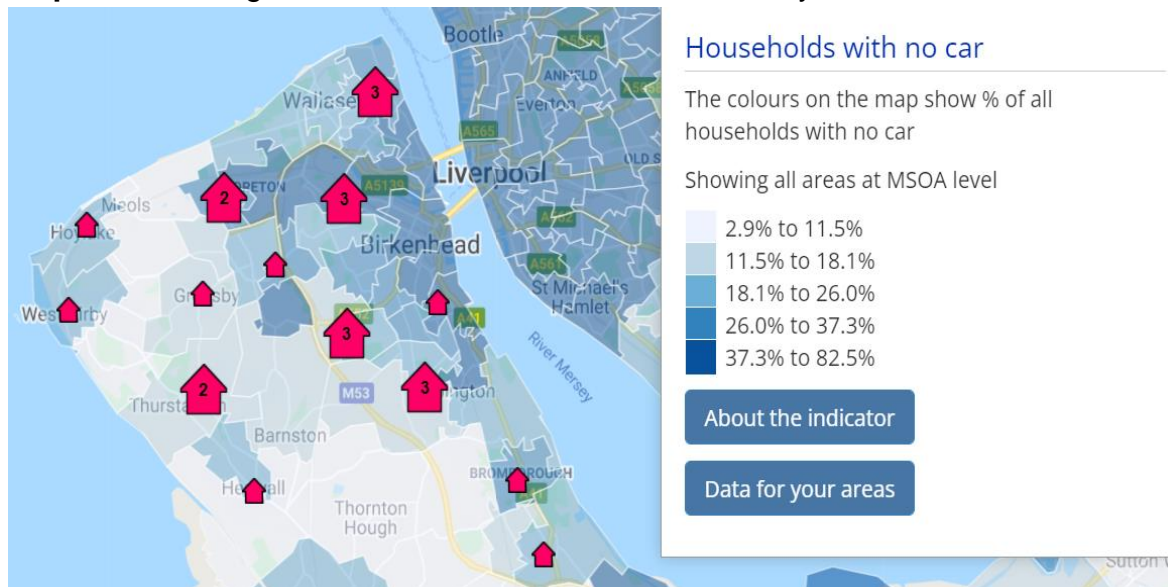
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Wirral's demographic need: key messages

- Wirral has a population of 324,336 as of 2020, with a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of working age people compared to England
- The population is projected to increase by 1.6% overall by 2039 to 328,500
- The population of children and young people is projected to decrease by 7.2% (57,200 in 2018 to 52,900 in 2038)
- The number of residents aged over 65 years is expected to increase by around 32% by 2028 (69,700 in 2018 to 92,300 in 2038)
- Birkenhead & Tranmere ward has the lowest life expectancy at birth for males (72.8), whilst Greasby, Frankby & Irby has the highest (83.5). For females, Rock Ferry has the lowest life expectancy (76.5) whilst Wallasey has the highest (87.7)
- 110,000 people, or just over 35% of Wirral's population, are living in the top 20% deprived areas in England
- 36.6% of the working age population in Birkenhead & Tranmere compared to 6.0% in Heswall claim working age benefit
- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards account for 41% of children living in low-income families
- 28% of Wirral households had no access to a car

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[33] 2011 Census

**Demographic need relating to Universal Library offers**

Taking the four overarching Universal Library Offers, as shown previously, and using demographic indicators that can be mapped, these key areas can be assessed. The four Universal Library offers underpin the strategic priorities of the draft Library Service strategy for the next 5 years and by comparing local need to the Offers, future library service delivery can be informed by this data. The Offers do have some interconnection and should be considered holistically.

Reading

A lack of literacy skills holds a person back at every stage of their life and supporting children and adults to develop reading skills for school, leisure and work is critical[34]. Research suggests that children and adults who read for pleasure are healthier, happier, and more confident than those who do not[35]. Examining key demographic indicators, that can be linked to literacy, can suggest where local need is greatest.

Map 7 shows the proportion of pupils achieving their expected level in all Early Learning goals at the Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS). The level of progress children should be predicted to have attained at the end of Reception and the EYFS is defined by seventeen Early Learning Goals, within the goals are several literacy outcomes.

Map 7: Percentage of pupils achieving their expected level in all 17 Early Learning Goals with library locations 2013/14
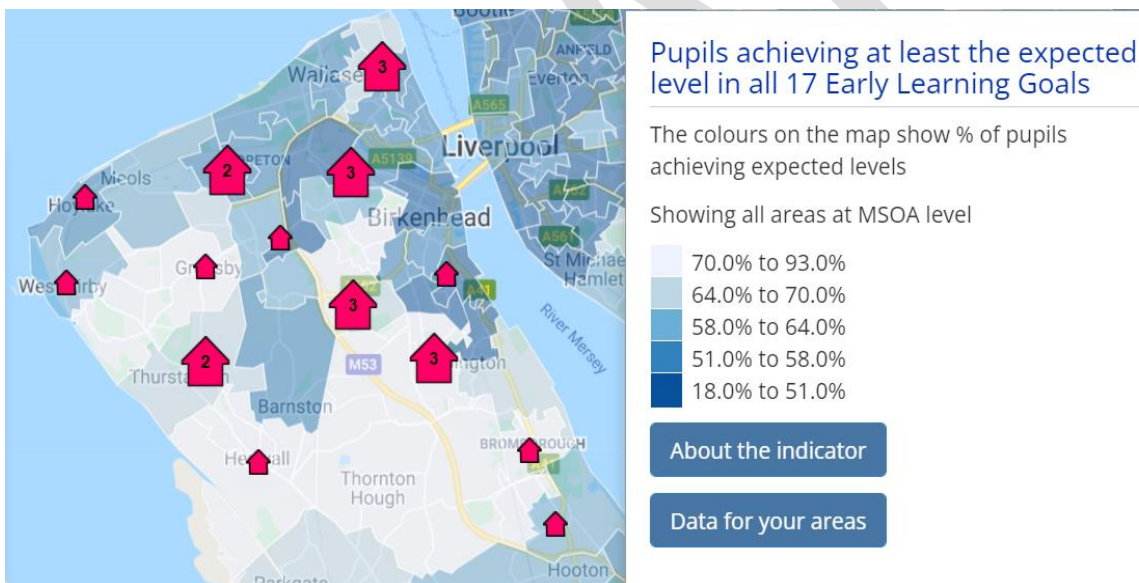
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Map 7 shows that pupils not achieving their expected level clusters around the east of the Wirral, the M53 corridor and the northern edges of the Wirral coastline, stretching from New Brighton to West Kirby. Areas with the highest percentage of pupils achieving expected goals include Clatterbridge, Heswall and West Kirby & Thurstaston wards, with small variations within the ward. Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry wards have the lowest achievement of expected goals, all showing levels of under 50%, compared to England at 58%.

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[34] What is literacy? | National Literacy Trust
[35] Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021

The headline Wirral schools Key Stage 4 attainment 8 score is above the national and regional averages[36]. As **map 8** below suggests, the educational attainment level of pupils varies significantly across the Borough, with a higher proportion of key stage 4 children in schools in the south and west of Wirral achieving the attainment 8 measure compared to those children in the less affluent north and east ward areas.

Map 8: Educational Attainment – attainment score 8 with library locations 2017
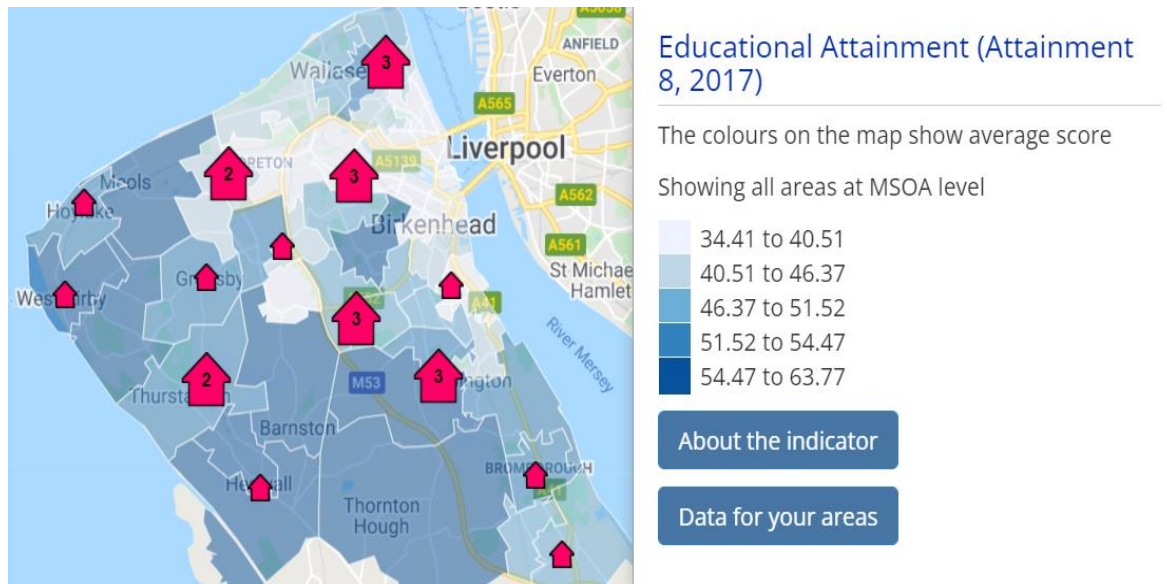
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Wirral also has a relatively low rate of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) compared to England[37]. There are approximately 12,800 people of working age in Wirral with no qualifications, or 6.6% of the working age population according to the ONS Annual Population Survey of 2020 as shown in **table 3.** This is slightly higher than the England average of 6.2% of the working population who have no qualifications, but lower than the North-West figure of 7.5%.

Table 3: Level of qualification in Wirral, North-West and England in 2020 for adults

Qualification Level	Wirral		North West (%)	England (%)
	Number	**%**		
NVQ4 and above	72300	37.5%	38.7%	42.8%
NVQ3 and above	115600	59.9%	58.2%	61.2%
NVQ2 and above	155700	80.7%	76.9%	78.0%
NVQ1 and above	175000	90.8%	87.6%	87.9%
Other qualification	5000	2.6%	4.9%	5.9%
No qualification	12800	6.6%	7.5%	6.2%

Source: NOMIS 2021[38]

The proportion of people with no qualification (as a percentage of all people aged 16+) is higher in the more deprived areas of Wirral as shown in **map 9**, with Bidston & St James (38.5%), Rock Ferry (31.6%), Birkenhead & Tranmere (30.8%) and Seacombe (30.9%) wards having the highest levels of people with no qualifications whilst Heswall (12.6%) and Hoylake & Meols (14.8%) wards show the lowest proportion of people with no qualifications, according to the 2011 Census.

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[36] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[37] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[38] JSNA: Children & Young People Population & Demographics (wirralintelligenceservice.org)

Map 9: People with no qualifications with library locations 2011

People with no qualifications

The colours on the map show % with no qualifications (as % of all people aged 16+)

Showing all areas at MSOA level

- 1.7% to 16.0%
- 16.0% to 20.0%
- 20.0% to 24.0%
- 24.0% to 29.4%
- 29.4% to 50.7%
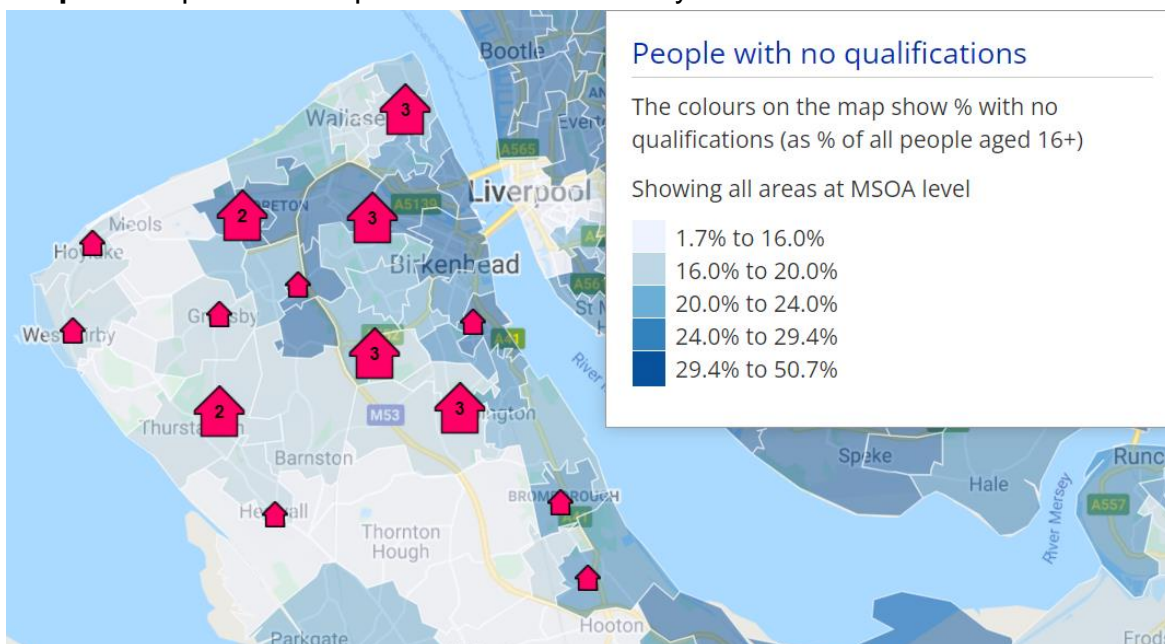
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Information and Digital

Information literacy has relevance for everyday life, citizenship, health, education and the workplace and libraries have a key role to play in supporting individuals to access accurate and unbiased information that can inform life choices and support economic development through employment and business advice. Individuals also require skills and confidence to support learning. Libraries can be seen to provide a safe trusted space in which to learn.

As individuals increasingly use digital devices and the internet, not all individuals will be able to go online. Some may lack the skills, confidence and motivation, whilst others may experience data poverty. Libraries can break down some of these barriers to increase digital inclusion, by increasing awareness and enabling users to have the skills and motivation to confidently go online and unlock opportunities and provide free or reduced cost data.

The Digital Exclusion Index (DERI) explores the risk of digital exclusion at a localised geographic level. The score is based on components such as age, broadband access, and deprivation. Wirral has a higher score than the national average, suggesting more of the population are at risk of digital exclusion than the rest of England. **Map 10** suggests the risk is higher to the east of the Borough stretching out towards the M53 areas of Moreton and Woodchurch, with Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Rock Ferry wards at greatest risk.

Map 10: Digital Exclusion Index with library locations 2021
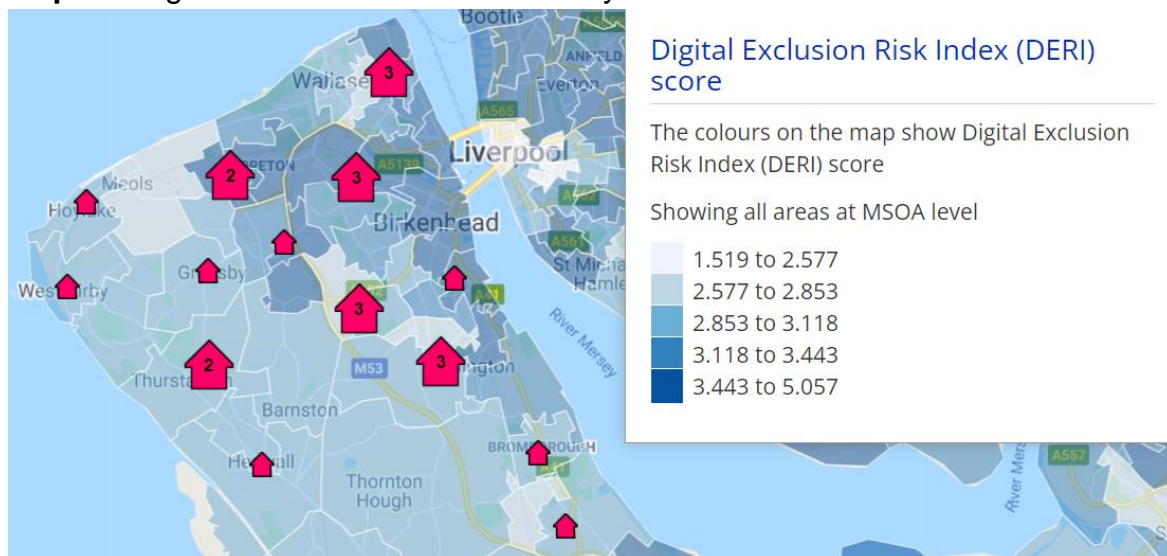
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

The University of Liverpool (2018) produced an Internet User Classification (IUC), which is a bespoke classification that describes how people interact with the Internet. The Passive and Uncommitted User[39] and e-Withdrawn[40] appear to be the two groups for whom internet access is least likely. Passive and Uncommitted Users classification is the 2nd most prevalent in Wirral (24% of the Wirral population) with the highest concentrations in Wallasey constituency compared to just 1 in 12 Wirral West constituencies. The largest majority of those classified as e-Withdrawn reside in the Birkenhead area, with very few in Wirral South or Wirral West constituencies. Nationally, only 8.8% of people are classified as e-Withdrawn, but this figure is 13.9% in Wirral, with Birkenhead constituency having 28.4% of its population classified as e-Withdrawn, compared to just 2.3% in Wirral South[41].

Since 2010 business growth in Wirral has increased by 1,945 enterprises to 8705 as of 2017, employing around 150,200 people. Most businesses in Wirral (88.65%) were classified as micro enterprises[42] (1-9 employees) with the second highest being small enterprises (10-49 employees) (9.53%). Business start-up levels in Wirral were increasing by 19 per 10,000 per population to a level of 47 as of 2017; despite this, levels were still behind the Northwest rate of 81. As of 2019 around two-thirds of employers in England anticipated the requirement to develop the skills of their workforce in the coming year (64%)[43].

Culture and Creativity

Community life, social connections and having opportunities to engage and participate in arts and culture can support health and wellbeing[44]. Libraries can reach audiences from all backgrounds and ages and provide a community based focal point for cultural and creative activities[45], whilst also supporting the local cultural economy. The creative sector is recognised as the fastest growing sector in the Liverpool City region[46].

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[39] The Passive and Uncommitted Users group comprises individuals with limited or no interaction with the Internet.
[40] The e-Withdrawn Group is mainly characterised by individuals who are the least engaged with the Internet.
[41] Census 2021: Wirral Council Data Pack (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[42] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[43] Employer Skills Survey 2019: Skills Needs (publishing.service.gov.uk)
[44] A guide to community-centered approaches for health and wellbeing
[45] The Outcomes | Arts Council England
[46] Leisure and Culture - Wirral Intelligence Service

Arts Council England[47] propounds that there is strong evidence that participation in the arts can contribute to community cohesion, reduce social exclusion and isolation and make communities feel safer and stronger. Evidence shows that engagement in structured arts and culture improved the cognitive abilities of children and young people, and that engagement in cultural activities also had a positive impact on specific health conditions including dementia, depression and Parkinson's disease.

The Community Needs Index[48] was developed to identify areas experiencing poor community and civic infrastructure, relative isolation and low levels of participation in community life. A high score indicating that the area has high levels of need. The overall score for Wirral in 2019 indicates a higher level of need compared to England (68 in England compared to 96 in Wirral), but also that there were significant variations within Wirral, for example scoring by ward varies from 122 in Bidston & St James to 41 in Clatterbridge as shown by the variation in shading on **map 11**. The data suggests that Moreton West & Saughall Massie, New Brighton, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards experience the lowest levels of participation in community life and are areas of poorer community and civic infrastructure.

Map 11: Community Need Index with library locations 2021
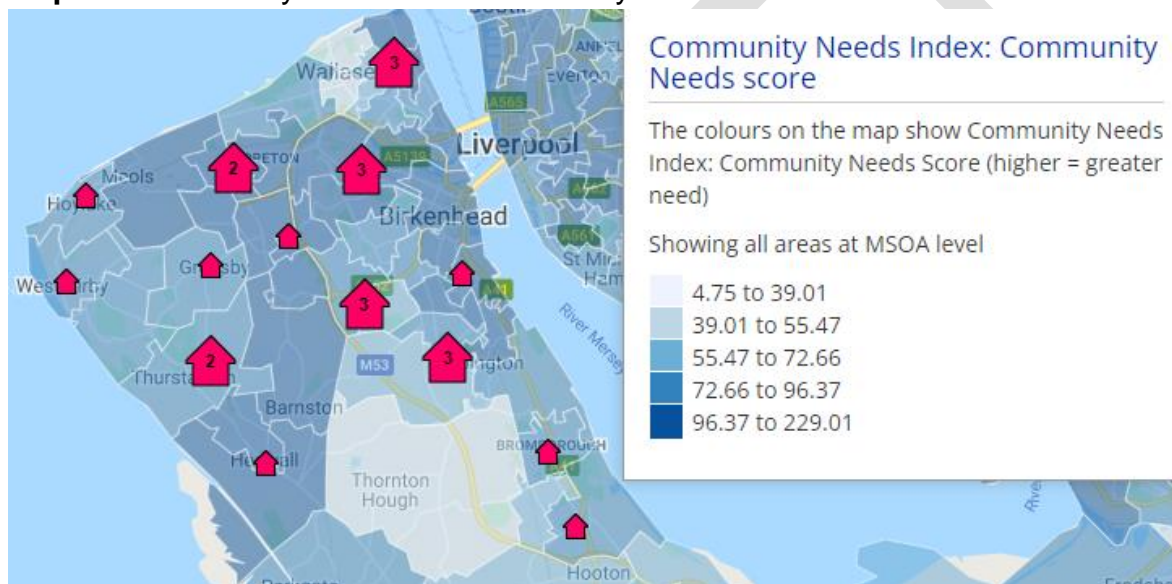
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Health and Wellbeing

Libraries offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality- assured reading lists dealing with more common health conditions[49]. Keeping people well and supporting people to manage their illness through accessible information, signposting to additional support and reading for wellness and self-care, promotes healthy living and self-management. Research from the Reading Agency[50] has also found that the benefits of reading include, increased empathy, better relationships with others, reduced symptoms of depression and dementia, and improved well-being. It is also widely recognised that social connection improves physical health and psychological well-being. Libraries can support better health and wellbeing outcomes at a preventative and low-level intervention level by supporting people with relevant activities and

[47] Arts Council England
[48] Community Needs Index - measuring social and cultural factors - OCSI
[49] Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021
[50] Reading Agency - Home | Reading Agency

events, reading material, healthy lifestyle promotion, information signposting and health literacy. Representative indicators have been chosen below to give a snapshot of local need.

People in Wirral spend just three-quarters of their life in good health (77.6% for men and women)[51]. Overall, 22% of the population reported that their day-to-day activities were limited in some way by an illness or disability in the 2011 Census[52] but this hides large variations by age (from just 7% in those aged <35 to 83% of those aged 85+)

According to Wirral's compendium of statistics, 2021[53], five issues in GP surgeries contribute to over 50% of the GP disease register prevalence rates, these are:
- Hypertension (High blood pressure) (16.4%)
- Depression (18.1%)
- Asthma (7.6%)
- Diabetes Mellitus (7.4%)
- Chronic Kidney Disease (5.1%)

Wirral also has an ageing population. **Map 12** shows a prediction of the prevalence of loneliness amongst residents, living in households, aged 65 and over, using a model devised by Age UK. The darker shading shows the areas with a greater prevalence of loneliness amongst those aged 65 and over. There is a propensity towards the east of the Wirral (Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards) stretching out along the top arc of the M53.

Map 12: Probability of loneliness for those aged 65+ with library locations 2011
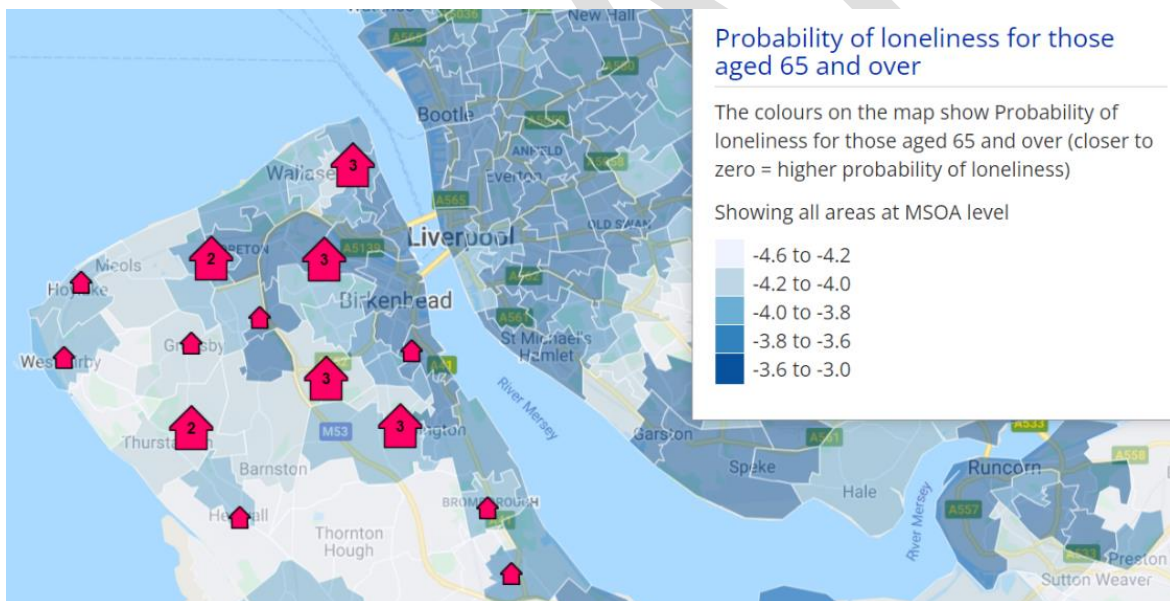
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Dementia is a growing challenge nationally and locally, with over 7000 people estimated to be diagnosed in Wirral by 2035. Reducing the risk of dementia, or delaying the onset, is influenced by a wide range of lifestyle factors, including the establishment and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle[54].

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[51] Life expectancy in Wirral 2017-19 (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[52] This is Wirral (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[53] Wirral Compendium of Statistics 2021 (wirralintelligenceservice.org)
[54] Wirral Dementia Strategy

Poor mental health affects communities differently across Wirral, with referrals to mental health services three times higher in areas of deprivation than more affluent areas. The prevalence of depression is much higher in Wirral than England, with 18% of adults compared to 11% nationally according to GP records[55].

Map 13 shows that those adults of working age, receiving incapacity benefit and employment and support allowance (IB/ESA) for mental health, live predominately to the east of the Borough stretching out to the north and central areas of Wirral. Wirral has a higher percentage (3.6% equating to 6903 people) people receiving IB/ESA than the national average (2.1%) as of 2021. Wards showing the highest numbers of claimants are Birkenhead & Tranmere (818), Bidston & St James (506), Rock Ferry (561) and Seacombe (579), compared to Heswall (73) and Greasby, Frankby and Irby (95) wards.

Map 13: People with mental health issues receiving IB/ESA with library locations 2021
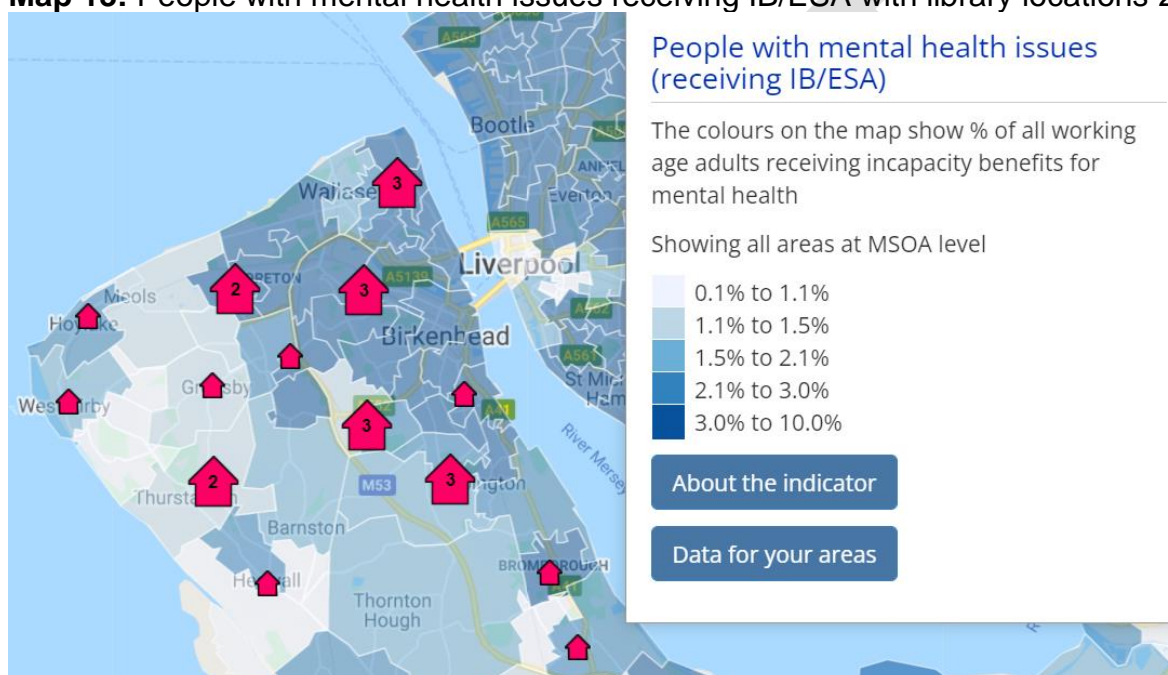
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Health Education England[56] states "*there is a crisis in adult literacy that directly impacts on people's health. In the UK 7.1 million adults read and write at or below the level of a nine-year-old and, critically, 43% of adults do not understand written health information.*"[57]

Demographic need relating to the Universal Offers key messages

- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry wards have the lowest achievement of expected Early Learning goals
- A higher proportion of key stage 4 children in schools in the south and west Wirral achieve the attainment 8 measure compared to those children in the less affluent north and east ward areas
- In 2020, 6.6% of the working age population in Wirral had no qualifications

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[55] Annual report of the Director of Public Health for Wirrral 2020-2021
[56] Improving health literacy | Health Education England (hee.nhs.uk)
[57] Adult literacy | National Literacy Trust

- Heswall (12.6%) and Hoylake & Meols (14.8%) wards show the lowest proportion of people with no qualifications, whilst Bidston & St James (38.5%), Rock Ferry (31.6%) have the highest proportion
- Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards are at greatest risk of digital exclusion when using the Digital Exclusion Index (DERI) Birkenhead constituency has 28.4% of its population classified as e-Withdrawn, compared to just 2.3% in Wirral South
- Most businesses in Wirral (88.65%) were classified as micro enterprises (1-9 employees) with the second highest being small enterprises (10-49 employees) (9.53%) as of 2017
- Wirral (96) scores a higher level of need than England (68) in relation to the Community Need Index
- Moreton West & Saughall Massie, New Brighton, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards experience the lowest levels of participation in community life and are areas of poorer community and civic infrastructure with respect to the Community Need Index
- Overall, 22% of the population reported that their day-to-day activities were limited in some way by an illness or disability in the 2011 Census, but this hides large variations by age (from just 7% in those aged <35 to 83% of those aged 85+)
- Over 7000 people in Wirral are estimated to be diagnosed with dementia by 2035
- The prevalence of depression is much higher in Wirral than England, with 18% of adults compared to 11% nationally according to GP records
- Wirral has a higher percentage (3.6% equating to 6903 people) of people receiving IB/ESA than the national average (2.1%) as of 2021. Wards showing the highest numbers of claimants are Birkenhead & Tranmere (818) and Bidston & St James (506)
- Nationally, 43% of adults do not understand written health information

Wirral Libraries data and performance comparators (CIPFA)

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic library data for April 2019 to March 2020 (2019/20)[58] and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) data 2019-2020[59] will be used for this assessment, unless stated otherwise. Further details of library specific data can be found in **appendices 2 to 7**.

Wirral Libraries has 24 libraries, with **map 14** showing the distribution of sites across the Borough. When a one-mile radius is shown around each library site, the map suggests a cluster of libraries, within one mile of each other, located in the central and east areas of Wirral.

Using CIPFA benchmarking data shows the number of libraries per 100,000 population for Wirral (7), is above the national and group comparator average (5)[60].

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[58] Bebington Central Library closed for approximately 3 months from mid December 2109 to March 2020 and no performance data is available for New Ferry and Ridgeway libraries
[59] Public libraries comparative profiles | CIPFA
[60] Bury, Calderdale, Darlington, Durham. North Tyneside, Rotherham, Sefton, Southend-on-Sea, Torbay

Map 14: Location of libraries with a 1-mile radius around each site
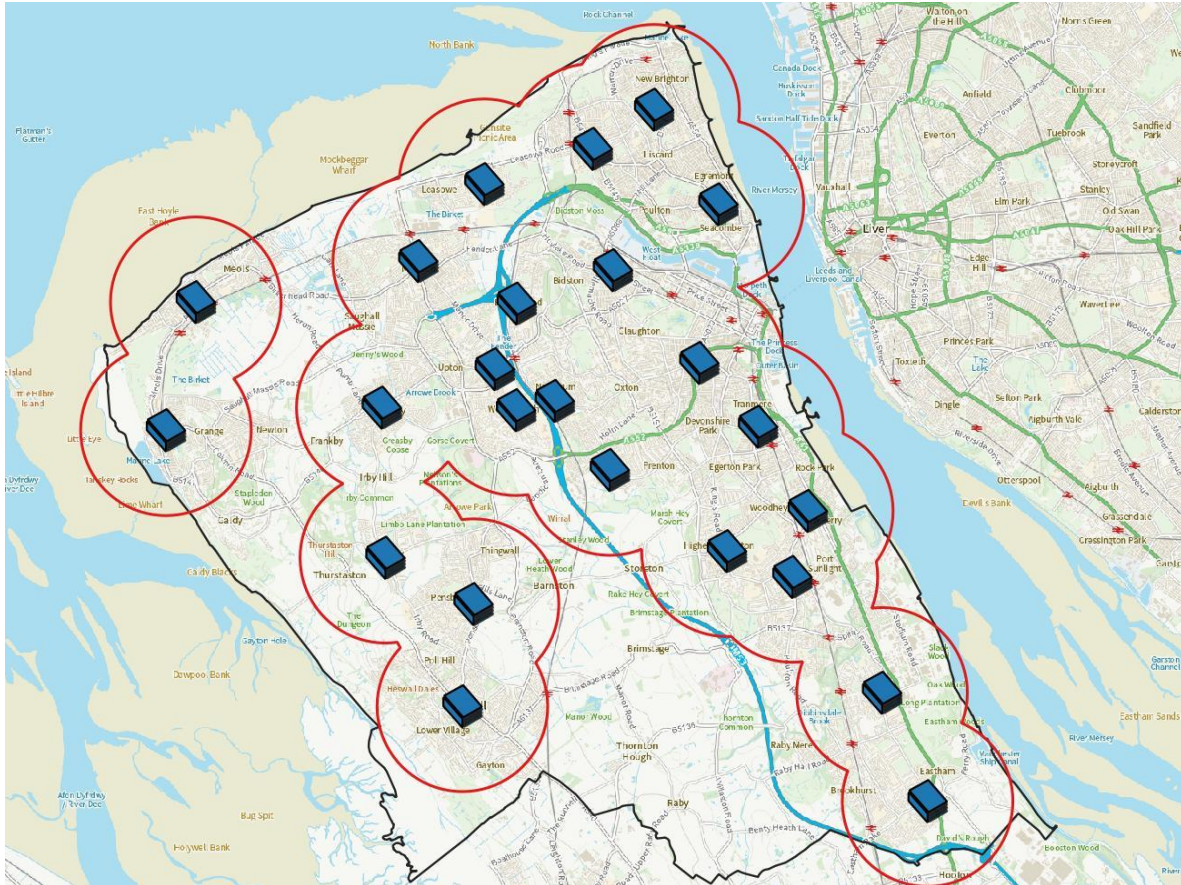
Source: © Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100019803
Note: Library locations shown in blue

The net expenditure per 1000 population for libraries is significantly higher for Wirral (£14935) than national (£11040) and group comparators (£11913) [61], when examining CIPFA benchmarking data.

Library usage is primarily measured by physical visits (footfall) and item loans. **Figure 3** below shows the total footfall for Wirral Libraries until 2019/20, with footfall decreasing by 376,557 visits over the five-year period, representing a decrease of 28.7%

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[61] Public libraries comparative profiles | CIPFA

Figure 3: Total footfall (physical visits) by year, Wirral Libraries 2015/16 to 2019/20

Total footfall per year
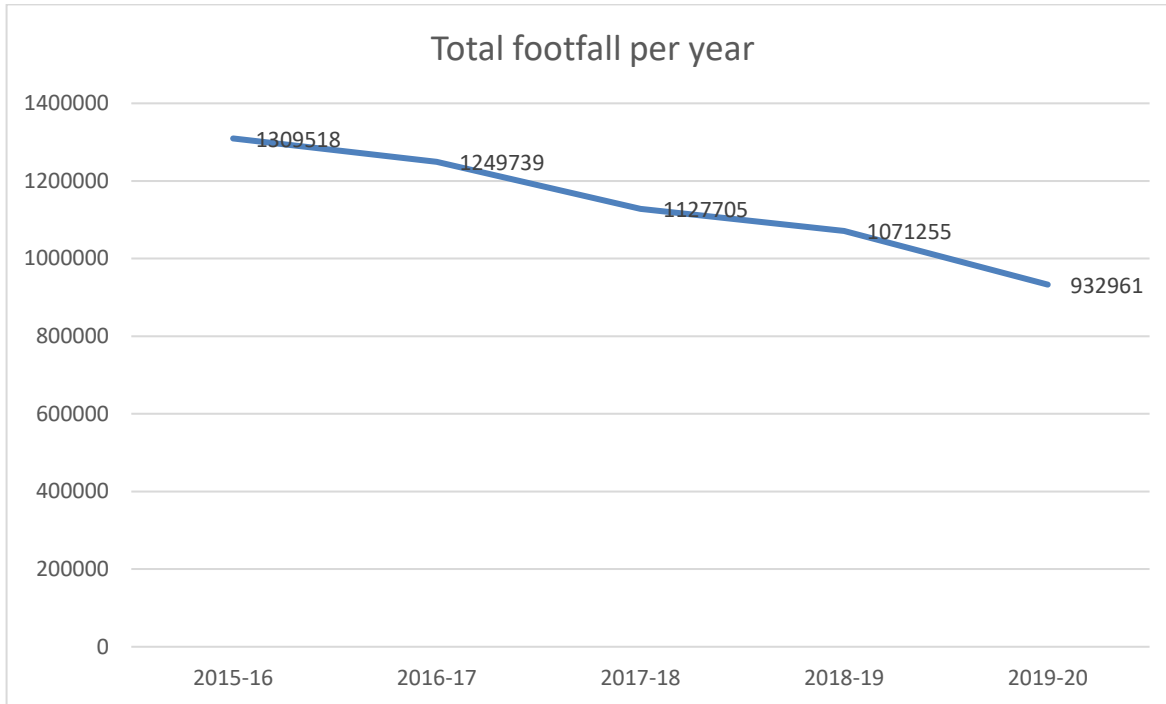
Source: Door counters at library sites (inhouse recording)

Using CIPFA benchmarking data the number of visits per annum at the busiest service point (West Kirby) were significantly below the average visits per annum at the busiest service point nationally, with the national average being 341,077 compared to 146,731 at West Kirby Library (comparator group 231,748). Physical visits per 1000 population see Wirral (2881) having a lower number of visits than national (3428) and group comparators (2941).

Map 15 below shows the number of library users per 1000 population, with regards to loan transactions, which generally contrasts to the map showing levels of deprivation **(map 4),** with West Kirby & Thurstaston and Hoylake & Meols wards having the highest number of users per 1000 population, with Claughton and Bidston & St James wards have the lowest number.

Map 15: Library users per 1000 population, Wirral Libraries 2017/18 to 2019/20

Library users (rate per 1,000)

The colours on the map show rate of library users per 1,000 population

Showing all areas at MSOA level

182.9 to 254.6
254.6 to 287.5
287.5 to 336.1
336.1 to 361.7
361.7 to 596.5
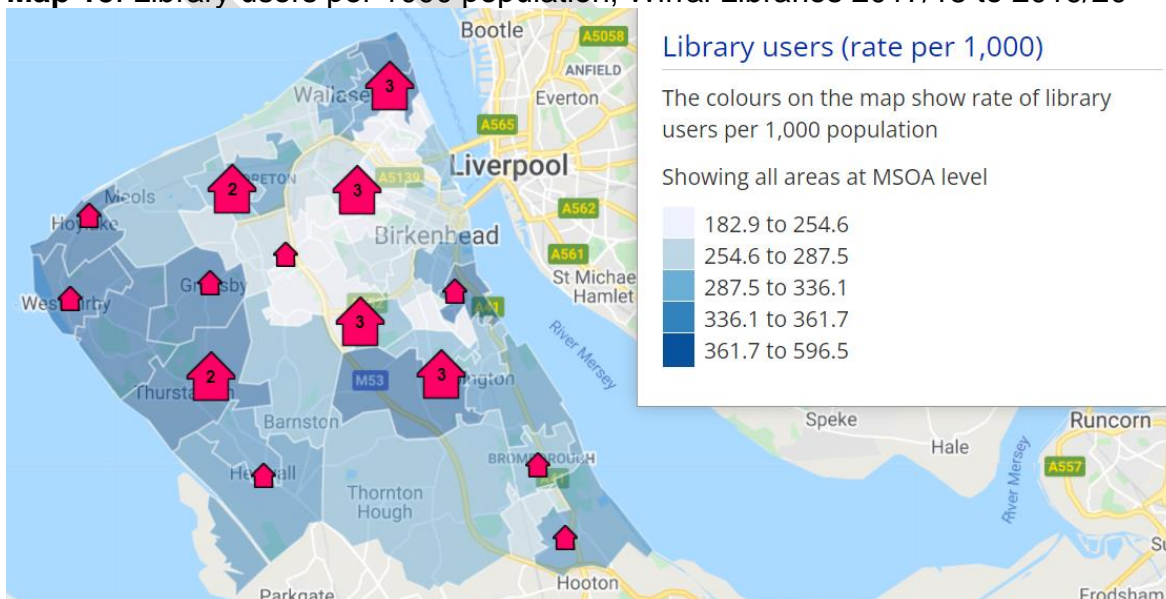
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Wirral Libraries has a slightly above average number of active borrowers[62] per 1000 population (116), compared to the national comparator (111), with the highest number of active borrowers per site found at the four central libraries, West Kirby (4826), Wallasey Central (4740), Bebington (4088) and Birkenhead (3532). The smallest numbers of active borrowers per site, (**appendix 2**), are shown to be at Leasowe (221), Woodchurch (243), Beechwood (260) and St James (356) libraries.

Figure 4: Number of active borrowers, Wirral Libraries 2012/13 to 2020/21
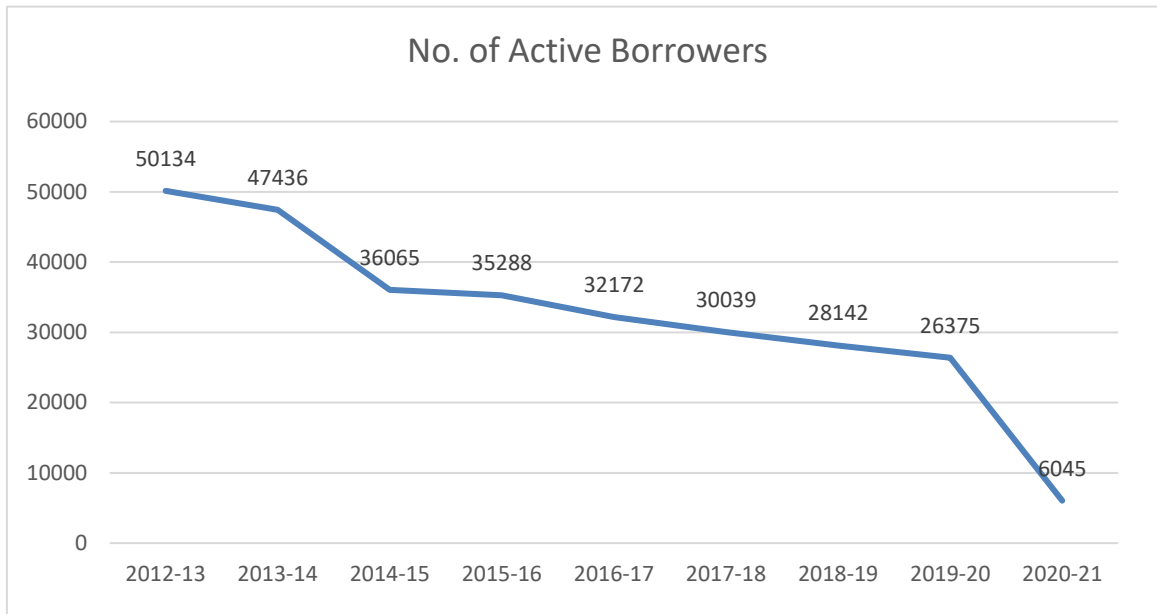
No. of Active Borrowers

The number of active borrowers has decreased in the last decade as seen in **figure 4**, with a significant decline in 2020/21, when the service provision was heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2012 there has been an 87.9% decline in the number of active borrowers. If 2012-20 is examined (removal of COVID-19 pandemic period), this shows a 47.3% decline in active borrowers.

It can also be seen that the percentage of Wirral's population[63] that are active borrowers has declined over the last decade (2011-18) (**figure 5**), however the rate of decline has slowed towards the end of the period, with approximately 13.8% of the population loaning an item in 2018/19.

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[62] An active borrower is defined as someone who has borrowed at least one item from the library during the year
[63] Public libraries comparative profiles | CIPFA

Figure 5: Active borrowers as a percentage of Wirral population, Wirral Libraries 2011/12 to 2018/19
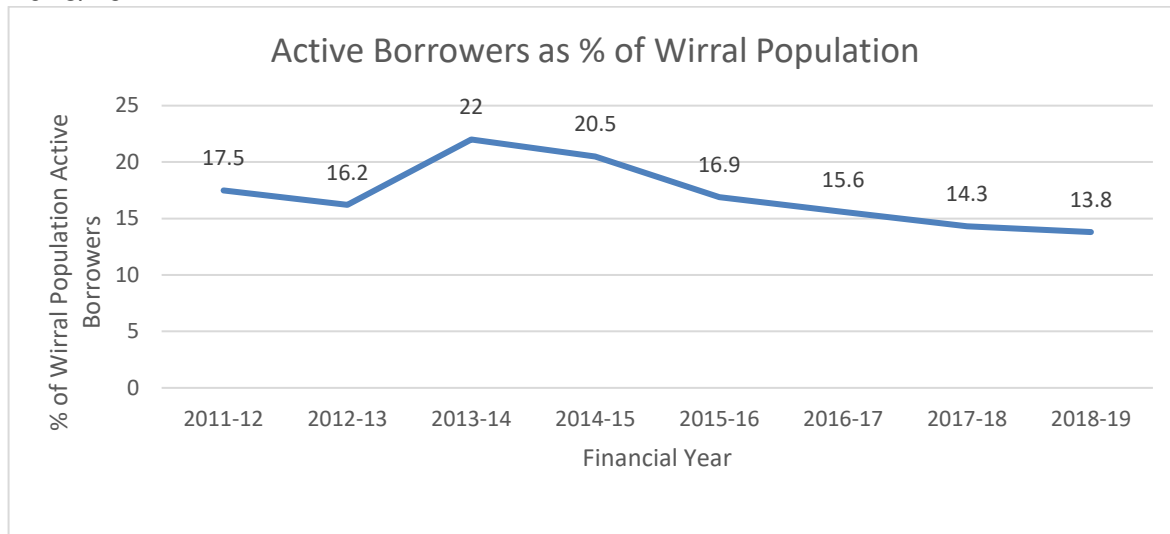
Active Borrowers as % of Wirral Population

Breaking down active borrowers by age provides further insight into the age profile of those individuals using the library service to loan items. **Figure 6** provides a snapshot and shows that the largest group of active borrowers is 60+ years old (36.6%), closely followed by 0–12 (32.4%), with the least number of borrowers in the 18-24 age category (1.4%). Children (0-12) and over 60s make up almost 70% of active borrowers.

Active borrower by age per site can be found in **appendix 3.** Bebington Central (1553), Wallasey Central (1504), West Kirby (1376) and Birkenhead Central (1045) libraries have the highest number of 0-12 active borrowers. West Kirby (1899), Wallasey Central (1559), Bebington Central (1338) and Heswall (1241) libraries have the highest number of over 60s as active borrowers. Age profile, as a percentage of active borrowers per site, does vary with some libraries having over 47% of their active borrowers aged 60+ (Heswall (47.6%) and Greasby (47.1%)), whilst Beechwood (48.8%) and Woodchurch (46.1%) libraries have over 46% of their active borrowers aged 0-12.

Figure 6: Age profile of active borrowers 2019-20, Wirral Libraries

Age Profile of Active Borrowers 2019/20

- 0 to 4: 10%
- 5 to 12: 22%
- 13 to 17: 2%
- 18-24: 1%
- 25-60: 28%
- 60+: 37%
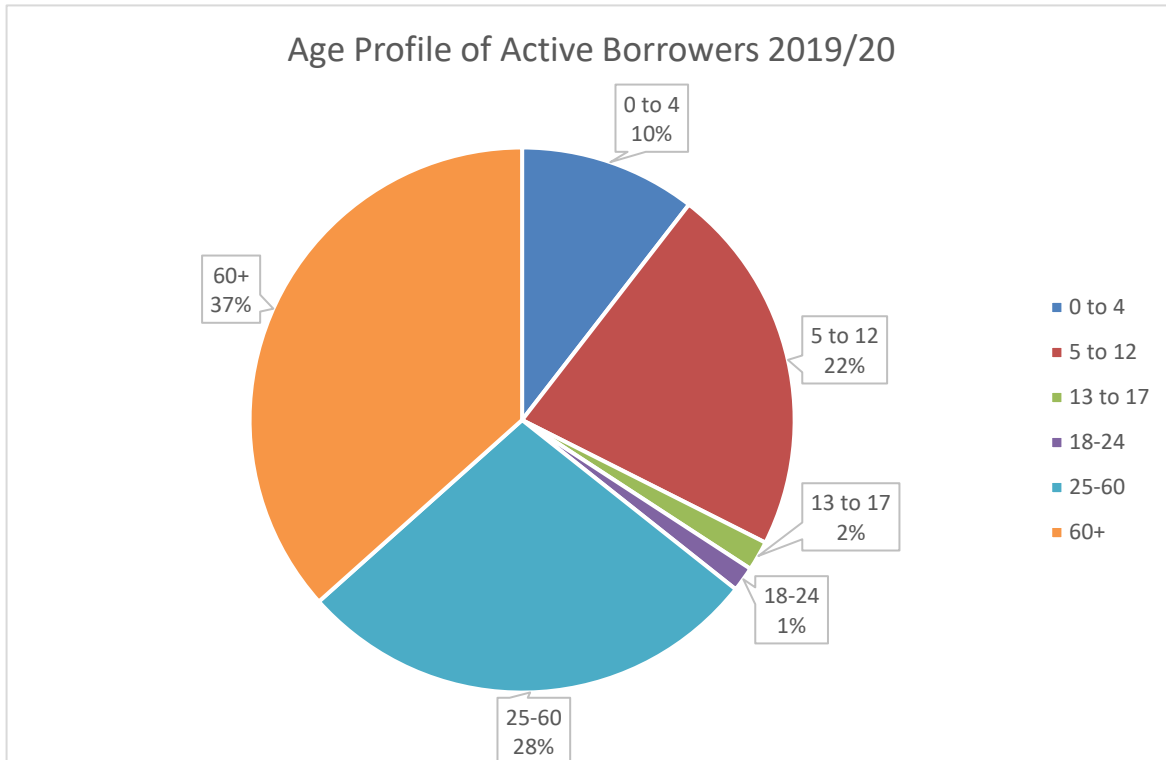
Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Figure 7 below shows that total loan transactions[64] have steadily declined up until (March) 2020, with the incremental decline decreasing towards the latter end of the decade. Between 2012 and 2020 there has been a 52.7% decline in the number of loan transactions. If the 2020/21 data set is incorporated, the period 2012 to 2021 has seen a 78.0% decline in total loan transactions.

Figure 7: Total loan transactions, Wirral Libraries, 2012/13 to 2020/2021

Total Loan Transactions

Financial Year	Number of Loan transactions
2012-13	1,657,121
2013-14	1,470,528
2014-15	1,256,538
2015-16	1,071,226
2016-17	974,152
2017-18	887,598
2018-19	826,836
2019-20	782,386
2020-21	364,503
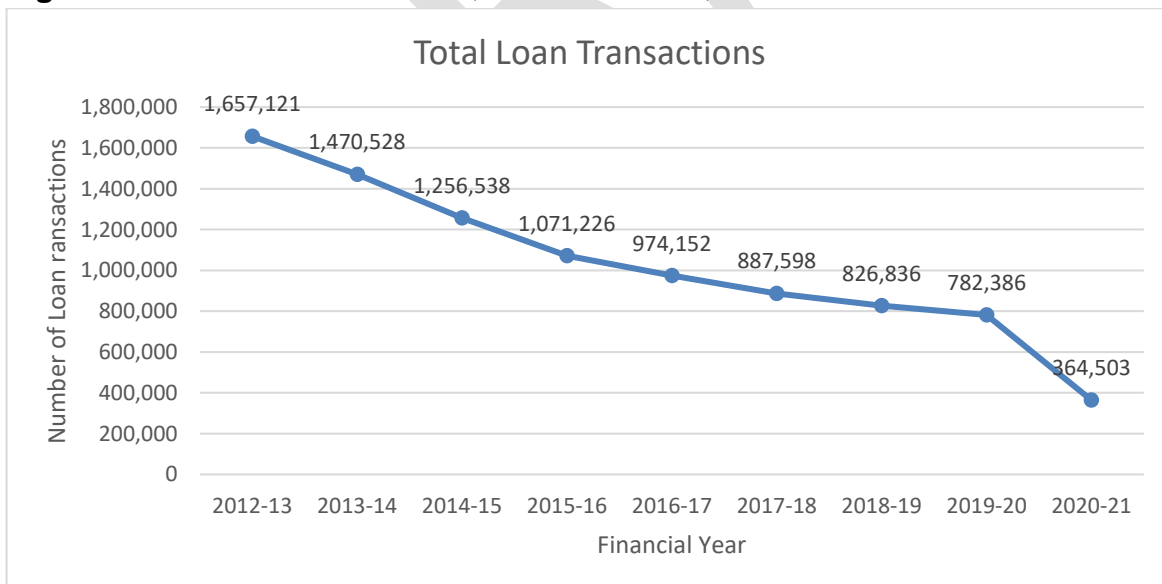
Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Appendix 5 shows number of items issued/renewals per site and issue/renewals per site broken down to adult and young person items. Leasowe (2637) and Beechwood (3772) libraries having

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[64] Total loan transactions exclude e-lending issues and toy library item issues/renewals

the lowest number of issues/renewals per site, whilst Wallasey Central (127,955) and West Kirby (107,722) libraries have the highest. Wallasey Central (94,203) and West Kirby (68,366) libraries have the highest number of adult item issues/renewals, whilst West Kirby (39,356) and Bebington Central (35,390) libraries have the highest young person item issues/renewals.

Loan transactions per 1000 population, as suggested in **map 16,** varies across the Borough, with a higher concentration of activity to west, north and south Wirral, with the highest rates seen in West Kirby & Thurstaston, Greasby, Frankby & Irby and Hoylake & Meols wards, and the lowest in Bidston & St James and Claughton wards.

Map 16: Library loans per 1000 population, Wirral Libraries 2017/18 to 2019/20
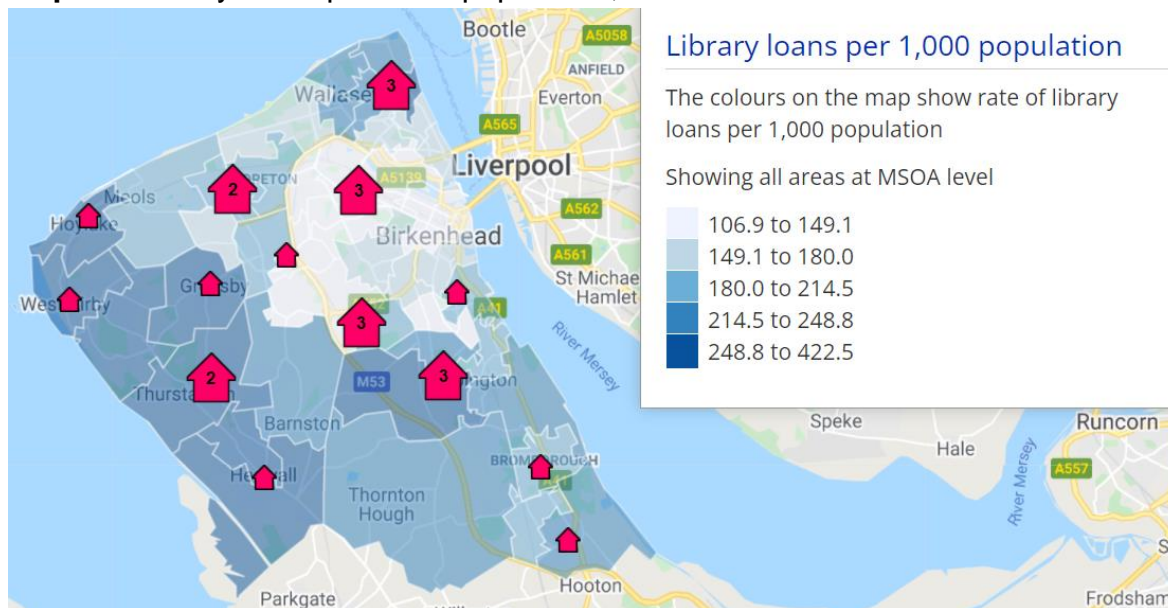
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Total book issues[65] at 2354 per 1000 population are slightly lower than the national comparator (2482), but higher when compared against Wirral's CIPFA comparator group (2199).

An online (virtual) library is available to all library members, for the loan of e-books and e-audio. As can be illustrated in **figure 8,** e-lending has increased over the decade, with a sharp increase in loans for 2020/21 when service points were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2012 there has been a 2101% increase in the number of e-lending issues.

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[65] This excludes items not classed as a book. Defined by CIPFA.

Figure 8: Total annual e-lending issues, Wirral Libraries 2012/13 to 2020/21
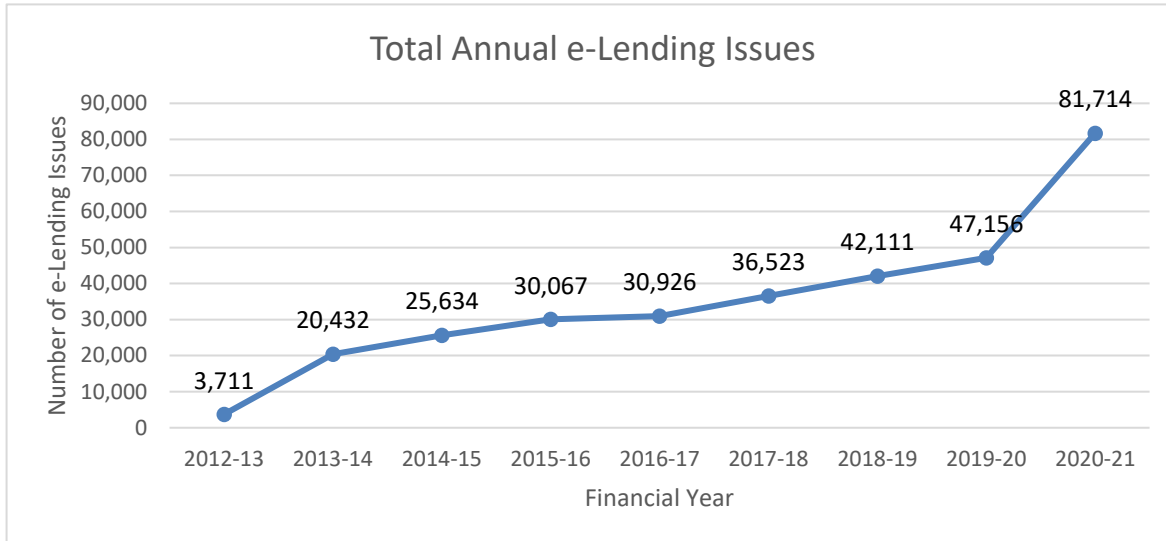
Total Annual e-Lending Issues

It should be noted that e-lending transactions almost mirrors physical loan transactions by area. These are focussed to the west, north and south Wirral areas (**map 17**), with lower issues in areas of deprivation, with the lowest loan rate in the Bidston & St James and Seacombe wards and the highest in Greasby, Frankby & Irby and Heswall wards. E-book usage is 3 times lower in more deprived areas, compared to the least deprived areas.

Map 17: Library e-book loans per 1000 population, Wirral Libraries 2017/18 to 2019/20
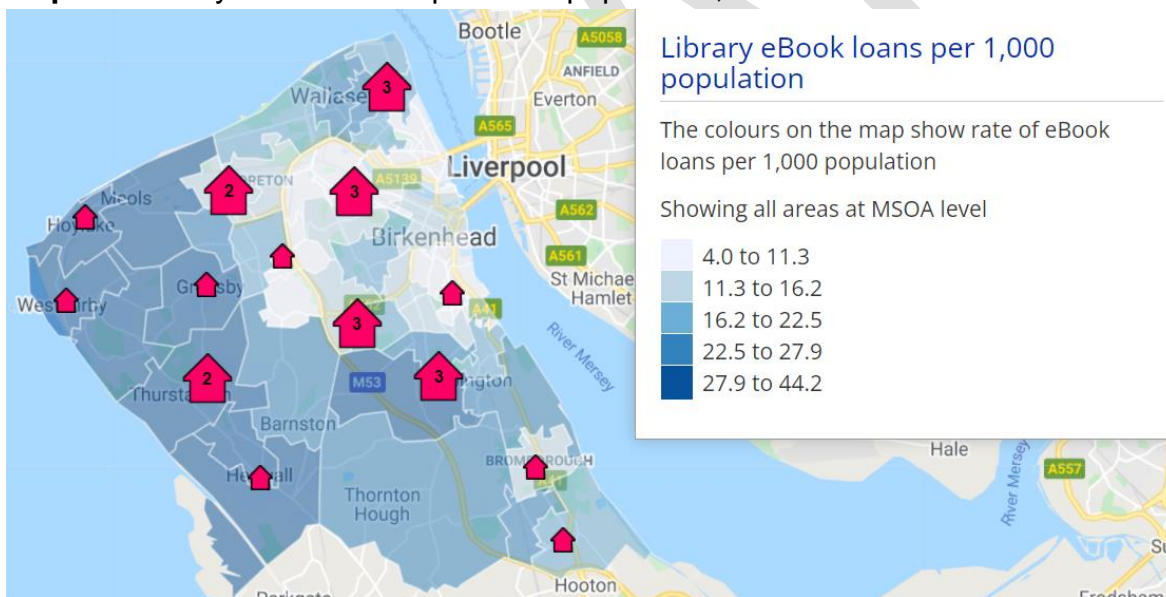
Note: Library locations shown in pink

PC (public computer) usage in Wirral Libraries is shown in **map 18,** with the highest usage per 1000 population in Birkenhead & Tranmere and Rock Ferry wards and the lowest in Heswall and Clatterbridge wards**.** The four central libraries (Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby) see the highest PC usage[66], with Birkenhead Central having the highest usage (15496), with Moreton (11,136) and Rock Ferry (11,062) libraries also showing high usage figures (**appendix**

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[66] Data for 2018/19

6). Woodchurch (543) and Higher Bebington (747) libraries have the lowest number of logins. PC usage is more than double in areas of deprivation compared to the least deprived areas.

Map 18: Library PC usage per 1000 population, Wirral Libraries 2017/18 to 2019/2020
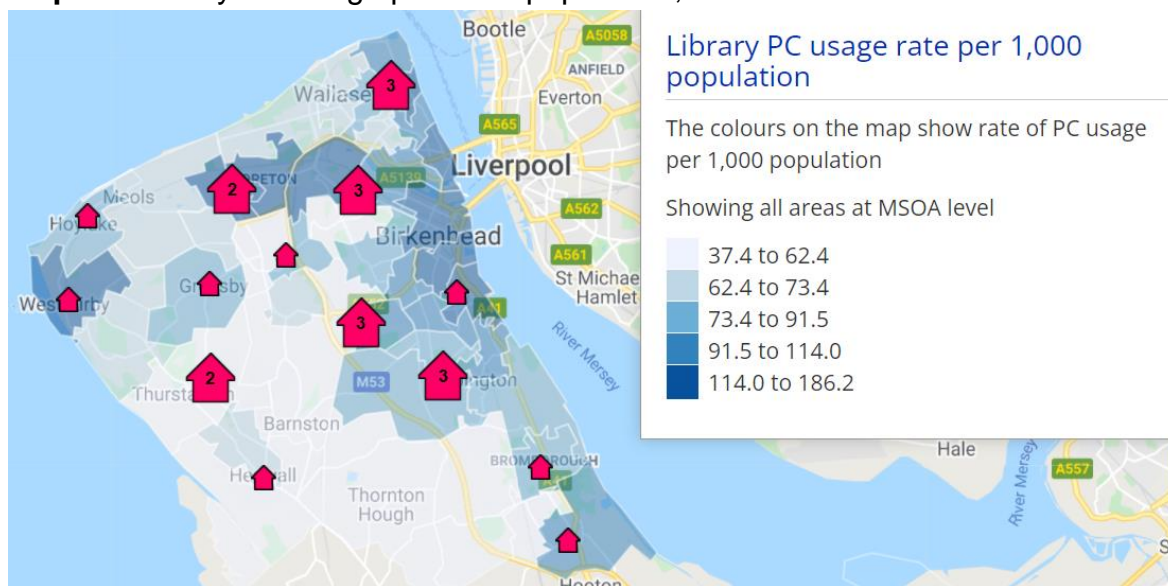
Source: Local Insight (communityinsight.org)
Note: Library locations shown in pink

Wi-Fi usage[67] at library sites follows a similar trend as PC usage, with a concentration at the four central libraries (Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby), Moreton (1330) and Rock Ferry (1747) libraries. Higher Bebington (116) and Woodchurch (150) libraries see the lowest Wi-Fi usage per site (**appendix 7**)

The number of activities per site varies greatly across the service provision (**appendix 1 and 4**), with Wallasey Central (82) and West Kirby (79) libraries offering the highest number of activities that occur at least once a month. Higher Bebington (1), Woodchurch (4), Leasowe (5) and Heswall (6) libraries have the lowest number of activities occurring at least once a month. The purpose and audience of the activities also varies across sites, for example more work clubs are held in areas of deprivation than less deprived areas and there is a concentration of reading groups at the four central libraries Also, indicative data shows that activities in areas of deprivation were predominately run by established partner organisations, whilst those in more affluent areas were run by established groups, 'Friends of', volunteer groups and individuals.

The Home Reader service predominately provides a service to older individuals in their home or sheltered/residential settings, with over 300 users in the year 2019/20, issuing over 14000 items. **Map 19** shows the location of users by postcode, with a higher number of users located to the east of Wirral. The number of Home Reader users per 1000 population is comparable to other local authorities as defined by CIPFA.

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[67] Data for 2018/19

Map 19: Housebound users by membership postcode, Wirral Libraries, 2019/20
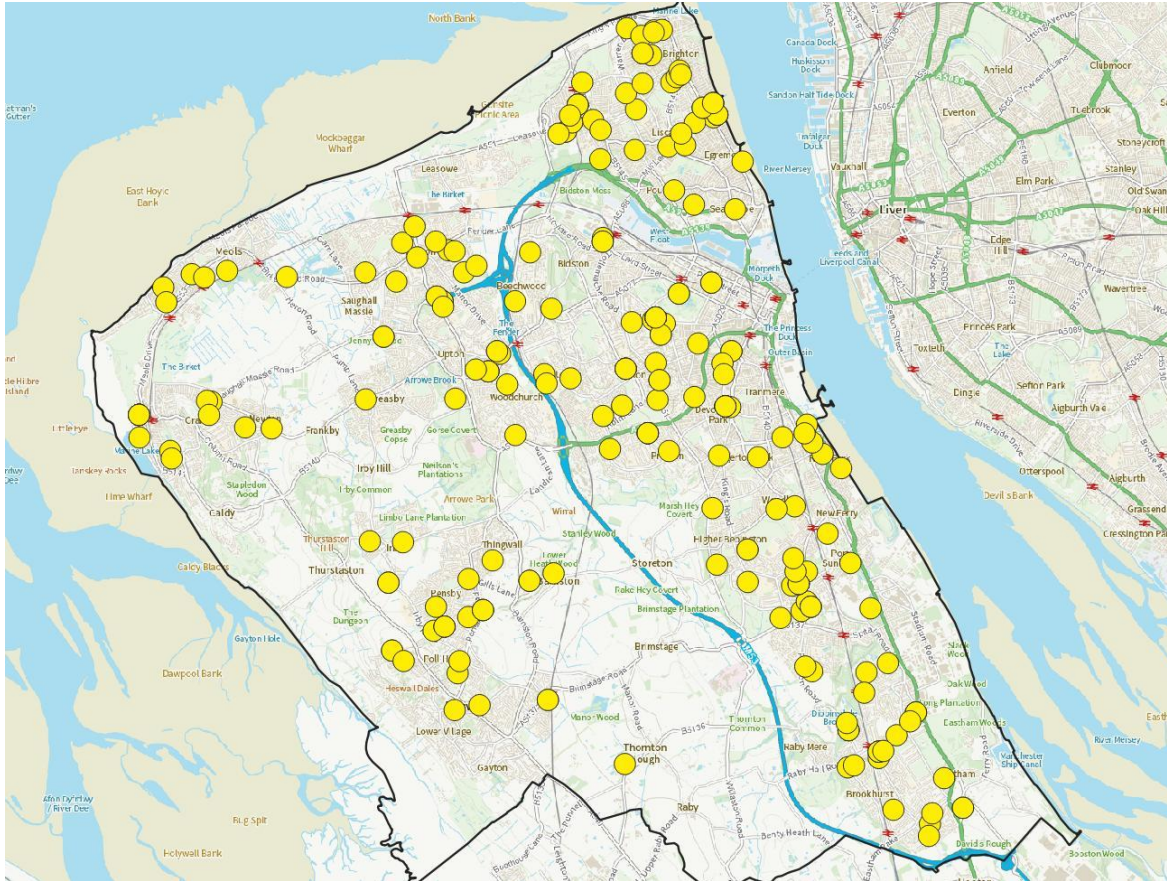
Source: © Crown copyright and database rights 2021 Ordnance Survey 100019803
Note: Housebound user shown in yellow

Benchmarking data from CIPFA shows Wirral Libraries has a significantly lower number of volunteers (180) supporting the service than the national average (319) in 2019/20. Volunteers currently support the service in a number of roles including 'Library Express', IT, Reference, Home Reader and 'Friends of' events.

Wirral Libraries data key messages
- The number of libraries per 100,000 population for Wirral (7), is above the national average (5) and group comparator average (5)
- The net expenditure (£14935) per 1000 population for Wirral is significantly higher than national (£11040) and group comparators (£11913)
- Footfall decreased by 376,557 visits over a five-year period (2015-2020), representing a decrease of 28.7%
- Since 2012 there has been an 87.9% decline in the number of active borrowers
- The largest group of active borrowers is 60+ (36.6%), followed by 0–12 (32.4%), with the least number of active borrowers in the 18-24 age category (1.4%), as of 2020
- Between 2012 and 2020 there has been a 52.7% decline in the number of loan transactions
- Bebington (4088), Birkenhead (3532), Wallasey Central (4740) and West Kirby (4826) libraries have the highest number of active borrowers, whilst Leasowe (221), Woodchurch (243), Beechwood (311) and St James (356) libraries have the lowest number as of 2020
- Leasowe (2637) and Beechwood (3772) libraries have the lowest number of issues/renewals per site, whilst Wallasey Central (127,955) and West Kirby (107,722) libraries have the highest number as of 2020
- Since 2012 there has been a 2101% increase in the number of e-lending issues

- E-book usage is 3 times lower in more deprived areas, compared to the least deprived areas of Wirral
- The four central libraries (Bebington, Birkenhead, Wallasey and West Kirby), plus Moreton and Rock Ferry libraries have the highest number of PC and Wi-Fi logins of all Wirral Libraries as of 2019
- Wallasey Central and West Kirby libraries offers the highest number of activities and events that occur at least once a month in 2019. Higher Bebington, Woodchurch, Leasowe and Heswall have the least number of activities and events occurring at least once a month

Local, Community and Stakeholder views

Public consultation exercise (June-September 2021)

A consultation exercise was completed from 28 June to 20 September 2021, utilising a range of engagement methods developed to collect feedback through different routes and to maximise the engagement approach to enable access to those who wanted to take part. A report on the public consultation is available as a separate document.

The consultation questionnaire was developed to enable participants to share their views about Wirral Libraries and a draft Library Strategy. It focussed on several different themes and information was requested about current library provision to find out which facilities and services worked for residents, and which did not. Participants were also asked what would improve the service, how they valued the service and how service delivery could be supported in the future.

The consultation was primarily carried out using Wirral Council's 'Have Your Say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk, with key documents published on the webpage for download. Paper copies were also made available. An ideas board, where participants could submit their own ideas and interact with other people's ideas by 'liking' and commenting on them was hosted on the consultation portal. In addition, a series of events and key stakeholder sessions were offered and held, including sessions in the community, schools, with Council staff and at specific stakeholder meetings.

Whilst the consultation is a collection of viewpoints and feedback about the service rather than an assessment of need, it is nevertheless relevant to the needs assessment as it demonstrates what participants felt was most important about the service provision and how this could possibly be supported in the future.

A total of 1562 survey responses were received with an additional 14 community engagement sessions and specific stakeholder group discussions. Of the survey responses, 89.9% of the respondents were library members and the most represented areas were Bebington and Greasby, Frankby and Irby areas of Wirral (each 11.1%). Clatterbridge and Claughton were the least represented (0.9%).

Key findings from the consultation highlighted that the most common frequency to visit the library was once a month, followed by once a week and the most popular mode of travel to the library was foot (65.4%), followed by walking (43.9%).

The most prevalent reason to visit the library was to borrow and return books (89.9%), with leisure and relaxation, event attendance and photocopier/printer use the next most prevalent reason to visit a library. Service offers, that respondents would like to see within the library service provision was a café (51.1%), followed by events for adults (47.7%) such as talks or author events, and organised groups (37.5%), event/exhibition space (36.6%) and creative spaces (34.2%).

For those respondents who stated they do not use a library, most provided an "other" reason, which was predominately that their local library was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Additional reasons for not accessing the service were equally proportioned between:
- I am too busy (18.9%)
- I use another book service (18.9%)
- Inconvenient opening hours (18.9%)

Services that would support respondents who do not currently use the library service were café facilities (54.5%), followed by events for adults (36.4%).

The top services respondents would like to access via the online library were a wider variety of book genres (53.9%) and an increase in the number of titles available, with the most desired service for future online library provision being able to access to archive information (38.4%).

With regards to user satisfaction statements about the library service:
- The majority of respondents (73.2%) felt positively about the service provided by Wirral Libraries and
- Most respondents either strongly agree (50.5%) or agree (37.7%) that the library staff are helpful and knowledgeable
- Most respondents either strongly agree (59.1%) or agree (31.0%) that they feel welcomed and safe at the library
- Most respondents either strongly agree (56.4%) or agree (34.0%) that they find the library service useful
- Most respondents either agree (32.2%) or strongly agree (24.7%) that the library opening hours are helpful.
- Most respondents (38.8%), either agree nor agree that they feel confident accessing the online library

As previous stated the draft Wirral Libraries Strategy has four key priorities and respondents were asked to rank in order of importance. These priorities are Reading, Information and Digital, Culture and Creativity, Health and Wellbeing.

Figure 9: Average rank of library service offer (4 thematic priorities) Wirral Libraries Consultation Survey, 2021

Average rank of services (1- most important, 4- least important)

Service	Rank
Reading (reading groups/ reading challenges and books)	1.51
Information & Digital (IT facilities/ computer use/ research)	2.75
Culture & Creativity (live events and gigs/ arts and crafts)	2.74
Health & Wellbeing (events to meet new people/ health information/ support groups)	2.88
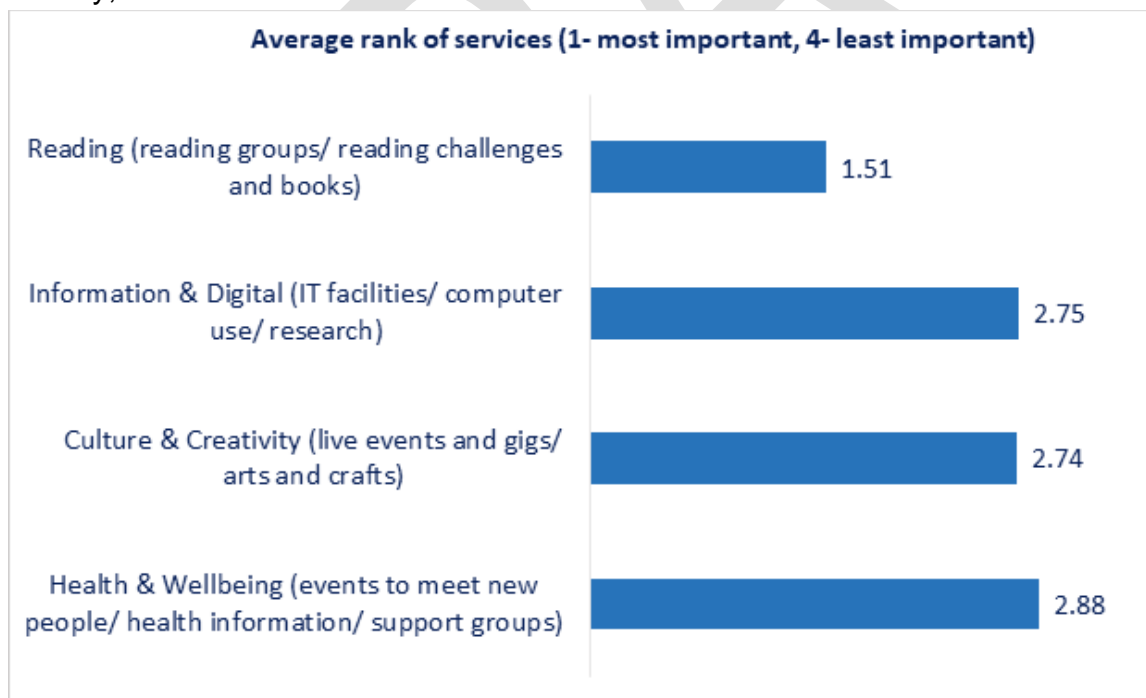
Source: Wirral Intelligence Service

As **figure 9** shows "Reading" is seen as the key priority respondents deem as the most important, with Health and Wellbeing ranked as the most important by the fewest people, however the figure illustrates that respondents ranked the remaining three priorities (excluding Reading) as almost equally important when an average rank was calculated.

Within the consultation document four different types of libraries were proposed. A Neighbourhood Library (48.8%) was felt to be the most suitable for the library they use the most, with the next most suitable option being a Central library (28.6%). A Community Managed (4.7%) was deemed the least suitable. Respondents predominately thought that community groups (58.9%) and volunteers (56.1%) could support the Council to deliver the library service. However, when respondents were asked would they like to be involved in the running of the service, 70.6% said 'no'.

Finally, the consultation questionnaire asked for further comments and ideas, these have been grouped into themes, with the top 4 highlighted below:

- **Libraries**
  Many comments focused on the request that libraries reopen or be kept open. As the consultation was completed during a period when service delivery was impacted by COVID-19, this feedback is unsurprising as pre-COVID-19 service delivery had not recommenced.

- **Facilities and Events**
  In terms of facilities, respondent feedback focussed on access to computers and improving the access to printing, computers and reference resources. As previous highlighted café facilities were a common theme, with space for study and group activities also a service outcome.

- **Events**
  Events currently held (pre-March 2020) and events they would like to see in the future were the main areas of feedback. Events for children and adults were a common response with the request that provision be increased.

- **Importance of Libraries**
  Respondents felt that libraries were an essential service and the importance to themselves, and the community was key, with its linkage to encourage reading and literacy being a factor.

71 contributors submitted or commented on 66 ideas to the ideas board tool. The top three common themes were:
- Events- events wanted at libraries
- Facilities- café facilities, agile working spaces, improved computer access and support
- Staffing- use some volunteers, paid staff needed

Community and key stakeholder events were carried out and from event discussions key themes raised across the events were identified and summarised. Themes that were mentioned several times at the community events included the importance of libraries, and that they were seen as an essential service and important community hubs. There was a desire for them to re-open following COVID-19 closures and they were seen as important for social interactions, with services run from the libraries, including events for adults and children and One Stop Shop provision, being valued and that more could be provided. Feedback also noted that library buildings were outdated and had a poor appearance, with more funding required for the service. Space utilisation within libraries was raised and it was noted that improved communication with communities to promote the offer would be beneficial, with an improved book and computer offer.

From engagement with key stakeholders, public accessibility of libraries was important and public transport was important to users with disabilities. Home Reader was a valued service and there was potential for health partners in Wirral to link residents they worked with to the library service,

with a focus on supporting their health and wellbeing and to improve people's use of digital technology.

Under 16s feedback was reported back separately within the report and there were specific engagement sessions with young people. Although their feedback generally mirrored key findings, it was cited that the most common reason for not using a library was they did not live close enough to a library. A café and creative space were the most popular services under 16s would like to use in the library, whilst under 16s preferred a Central Library option. Under 16s thought that volunteers (46.2%) could support the Council, whilst 52.6% of respondents said they would not like to be involved with the running of the library. Many under 16s were unaware of the online library offer at the specific engagement sessions and attendees noted book collections could have greater relevance and diversity

Intelligence from commissioned engagement activity in Wirral (2017)

Significant engagement activity was carried out to inform the needs analysis provided by Shared Intelligence[68] and BWB[69] in 2017, with both agencies capturing and summarising the key messages that they heard during this process. Shared Intelligence's report focused on the development of a sustainable Wirral Libraries model, whilst BWB's project examined the delivery of an integrated portfolio that better met local needs.

Stakeholder engagement activity carried out by Shared Intelligence identified the following themes:
- Stakeholders and partners value the service and are keen to support a more needs-focussed library service
- There are many examples of good practice and a capacity to change
- The library service reaches a large number of people, but is reactive rather than needs focussed
- Although libraries contribute to the (then) Council Pledges this needs to be planned and measured
- A lower-cost and more needs-focussed service seems impossible whilst also trying to sustain a network of 24 libraries

Further stakeholder engagement activity was carried out where stakeholders were asked to indicate what was most important to them about these services. The approach taken resulted in the submission of over 2,200 individual comments through workshops with staff and external stakeholders, and through an on-line survey. The following priorities were identified:
- That it's open and accessible to all as a community asset
- That it's affordable to use
- That the services on offer are of good quality
- That it provides the services/products that you want to use

The following areas with specific relevance to the library service were also identified:

[68] Shared Intelligence (2017) "Achieving a sustainable library service for Wirral" Available at: http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s50041586/Shared%20Intelligence%20-%20Sustainable%20Librariy%20:Service.pdf
[69] BWB (2017) "Re-imaging libraries, leisure, parks and cultural services Part 1" Available at: https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/Leisure%20parks%20and%20events/Leisure%20and%20Culture%20survey/BWB%20Phase%202%20Report%20Appendices%20Public.pdf
BWB (2017) "Re-imaging libraries, leisure, parks and cultural services Part 2" Available at: https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/Leisure%20parks%20and%20events/Leisure%20and%20Culture%20survey/BWB%20Phase%202%20Report%20Public.pdf

- **Outcomes**
  While many comments in the other themes implicitly include a view on outcomes, comments in this theme explicitly consider the impact that the services had on outcomes for individuals, groups and the wider community. This was often around health and wellbeing, education, social impacts and the contribution to the 'community' in Wirral. Comments often relate closely with accessibility to services e.g., job seekers using library resources, and operational improvement that would lead to better outcomes.

- **Volunteers**
  While there was concern with over reliance on volunteers there was also suggestions that the public could become more involved with services either as volunteers or for ongoing dialog about how services should be run. Stakeholders called for more control, and even ownership, to be given to groups.

- **Accessibility**
  In terms of issues at the time (2016), many people commented on opening times, inconsistencies, and cancellations. People felt that services should be open longer, particularly in the evenings, at weekends and on bank holidays when people want to access services. While these comments were predominantly from members of the public, staff also recognised the demand for change in this area.

- **Efficiency savings**
  Many of these comments related to opportunities to share assets and reduce the number of assets to not only save money but to improve services. These comments came from both members of the public and staff, particularly in relation to library services.

- **Marketing**
  From a communication point of view, comments often related to a lack of information available to the public. This often referred to a lack of marketing of both Council services and services and events offered within the community and by other providers. Many participants describe the role of the Council as a facilitator and platform to promote activities rather than delivery. This was particularly prevalent in relation to arts and culture where people were positive about the work done by groups outside of the Council.

Further independent engagement activity was carried out with a focus group of randomly selected Wirral residents to develop an understanding of how the library service fitted in with their lives and met their needs at the time of consultation. The exercise delivered the following findings:

- **Library usage**
  Libraries are held dear but were often not well used. The majority of participants were current library members, although around half did not use the library regularly. The most regular users tended to be older residents or those with small children, and the majority of members only used the book service or computer/printer services at the library.

- **Barriers to library use**
  The key barriers to using the library service appeared to be linked to the restricted opening hours, the limited ranges of books available and the lack of awareness of wider services.

- **Strengths of local libraries**
  The key strength of local libraries was the way they cater for young children and to some extent, older residents. Staff were also seen as a strength.

- **Weakness of local libraries**
  Limited and erratic opening hours and the lack of focus on teens/young adults were seen as key weaknesses. It also appeared that libraries were not seen as sources of advice or support, but more of a place to independently find information.

The ideal library was perceived to be a 'local community hub for optimism'. Residents could see a lot of potential for libraries to become a more valuable community hub, focusing on increasing access to community activities and offering something for all ages and working closely with other local services. However, it was considered key that this only happened if it is not done at the expense of losing the core offer/essence of the library.

Whilst residents appeared to be receptive to a potential new concept of the library and were open to libraries offering more to the community and working more closely with other organisations and services, they often held the view that libraries should not change 'too much' and still offer core services.

The majority of residents consider books, research resources and access to computers/printers as core offers/essence of the library service and offers that should not be reduced (and if anything should be increased), but when asked how they like to read books/conduct research, the majority did not access the library and instead preferred to use online resources, buy cheap books and have access to computers/printers.

Finally, a clear theme from the discussions around services available from the library was that whilst most or all of the focus group did use them personally, they felt that it was important that they were retained for those who may benefit from them.

Key messages from public engagement (2021)

- the most prevalent reason to visit the library was to borrow and return books (89.9%)
- service offers, that respondents would like to see was a café (51.1%), followed by events for adults (47.7%), and organised groups (37.5%), event/exhibition space (36.6%) and creative spaces (34.2%).
- reasons for not using a library were (excluding COVID-19 reason) 'I am too busy' (18.9%), 'I use another book service' (18.9%) and 'Inconvenient opening hours '(18.9%)
- respondents would like to access a wider variety of book genres (53.9%) via the online library
- the most desired service for a future online library was access to archive information (38.4%)
- the majority of respondents (73.2%) felt positively about the service provided by Wirral Libraries
- reading is deemed as the most important of four identified priorities
- Neighbourhood Library (48%) was deemed to be the most suitable type of library respondents use the most, whilst Community Managed (4.7%) was deemed the least suitable
- respondents predominately thought that community groups (58%) and volunteers (56.1%) could support the Council service
- respondents felt that libraries were an essential service
- feedback noted that library buildings were outdated and had a poor appearance
- space utilisation within libraries could be improved
- improved communication with communities to promote the offer would be beneficial

Key messages from commissioned engagement (2017)

- stakeholders and partners value the service and are keen to support a more needs-focussed library service
- there are many examples of good practice and a capacity to change
- the library service reaches a large number of people, but is reactive rather than needs focussed
- although libraries contribute to the (then) Council Pledges this needs to be planned and measured
- a lower-cost and more needs-focussed service seems impossible whilst also trying to sustain a network of 24 libraries
- the library service can impact on outcomes such as health and wellbeing and employment
- concern with over reliance of volunteers, contrasting with some stakeholders who called for more control
- service hour inconsistency and should be open for longer
- opportunities to share assets and reduce number of assets
- lack of information available to the public including marketing

What are we doing and why?

Current activity and services

Wirral Libraries has 24 libraries with digital access, a Home Reader service, and a range of of digital services and digital content accessible on the Council's web pages and dedicated library social media channels. This service provision is supplemented with a full calendar of activities and events that align to the Libraries Connected Universal offers. **Table 4** maps Wirral Libraries service offer[70] to the Universal Offers and Wirral Plan thematic priorities. A detailed breakdown of activities can be found in **appendix 1**[71].

Table 4: Universal Offers mapped to Wirral Plan priorities

'Libraries Connected Universal Offers	Wirral Libraries service offer (March 2020)	Wirral Council Plan thematic priority
Reading	- General and specialist book collections - Accessible stock in a range of formats - Home Reader service - Targeted literacy programmes - Adult learning support - Reading groups - Author and poet talks and events - Bounce and rhyme, storytimes - E-lending collection - Literary themed events - Bookstart book gifting - Dolly Parton Imagination Library gifting - Pre-school and class visits - Family learning sessions - Creative writing groups - Reference material (physical and digital) - Shared reading groups - Literature groups	- Brighter Futures - Inclusive Economy - Safe and Pleasant Communities
Information and Digital	- Public PCs and printing - Wi-Fi - Digital support (staff and volunteer) - Adult learning courses - Code Clubs - E-lending collections - Reference collections (physical and digital) - Digitised collections - Employment clubs - Local History events - Information signposting - Business and Intellectual Property information and support - Family learning sessions	- Brighter Futures - Inclusive Economy - Sustainable Environment

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[70] Thematically representative and not exhaustive
[71] Appendix 1 does not include one off events, programmes of work from externally funded projects, pre-school and class visits

	• Employment advice • Genealogical and Local History support • Social media channels	
Cultural and Creativity	• Art exhibitions and activities • Externally funded projects such as Arts Council England projects • Creative writing groups • Author and poet talks and events • Friends' events and activities • Music events and youth music development programme • Storytelling/poetry performances • Creative events and activities • Craft activities for young people • Lego and games clubs • Code Club • Family learning sessions • Adult learning programme • Local history information and resources • Community event support	• Inclusive Economy • Active and Health Lives • Safe and Pleasant Communities
Health and Wellbeing	• Reading Well and self-help collections • E-lending collections • Health and wellbeing books • Volunteering opportunities • Work experience placements • Health and Wellbeing marketplace • Reminiscence boxes and dementia friendly events • Tea and memories events • Signposting to services and information • Health walks • Family Connector service • Home Reader service • Wellbeing activities • Creativity events • Safe and welcoming community spaces • Public Health/NHS events	• Active and Healthy Lives • Brighter Futures • Safe and Pleasant Communities

Strategic priorities and measures for the future

As previous stated Wirral Libraries currently provide a core library offer across the Borough, as well as an online (virtual) library and Home Reader service.

Through consideration of library service best practice, national frameworks and engagement with users, volunteers, stakeholders and staff, a draft Library Strategy underpinned by the Universal Library Offers[72], has been designed to ensure a modernised and sustainable library service which seeks to respond and align to the Wirral Council Plan 2021-26[73].

Appendix 9 shows the four strategic priorities contained within the draft Library Strategy and the objectives and actions that will be implemented on approval, with key measurables that the service aims to achieve.

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[72] Universal Library Offers | Libraries Connected
[73] Wirral Plan 2021-26

Key issues and challenges

The needs assessment shows that Wirral's population has a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of working age people compared to England. The population is projected to increase, with the greatest increase in people over 65 years, with a projected decrease in children and young people. These two age groups currently represent the largest groups of active borrowers for Wirral Libraries.

Those areas of greatest need, using demographic and socio-economic indicators, are generally to the north-east of the Borough and follow the northern arch of the M53, through to the centre of the Wirral, with small pockets of need located elsewhere. Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry, Seacombe wards are consistently identified as areas of greatest need by indicators chosen within this needs assessment and wider evidence base.

These areas (including Bidston & St James, Birkenhead & Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe wards) have been shown to have lower levels of literacy, skills and qualifications in comparison with the rest of the Borough. In addition, some of these areas, suffer from acute deprivation, with health and well-being issues also predominant. However, the west of Wirral, which is predominately not indicated as an area of deprivation, has a higher percentage of people aged 65+, which presents a differing local need.

The indicators also show that the Borough is one of extremes, for example levels of life expectancy, attainment and community need vary considerable across the Borough. Many of these inequalities across Wirral are longstanding, with some residents experiencing the poorest outcomes in the country. How the library service tries to impact on these inequalities at a targeted intervention level will be challenging and focusing available resources for the best impact and value will be paramount in the context of a significant reduction in Council resources.

The picture in respect to library specific indicators and the service offer is quite complex. As previously shown the offer of loanable items (predominately books) is currently lower, in areas of deprivation, with libraries such as Leasowe, Beechwood, St James and Woodchurch seeing low transaction levels. This contrasts with the digital offer of PC and Wi-Fi access, where usage is higher in areas of deprivation, in sites such as Birkenhead and Rock Ferry libraries. Adding to the complexity is that some of these areas of deprivation appear to have few activities and events within the library space, such as Woodchurch, Leasowe and Beechwood libraries.

Data across the network reveals that the mainstay of the library provision is books (loanable items) and the public consultation showed that respondents felt the most important strategic priority was 'Reading'. Nevertheless, data shows that over the last decade item transactions (which are predominantly book loans) is decreasing, whilst e-lending is increasing. Also, active membership of the service is declining, with active membership within certain libraries being very low (Leasowe, Woodchurch and Beechwood libraries).

There is little library specific insight or data on non-library users and their perception and need of the service offer. The public consultation (2021) had a small data set who identified as non-library users. In addition, some ward areas had small data sets and were underrepresented within the consultation process despite efforts to increase engagement. The consultation also highlighted that the most suitable type of library from the four types proposed was a Neighbourhood library, however this contrasts with current service usage in which Central libraries have the highest service usage. Additionally, respondents predominately thought that Community Groups (58%)

and Volunteers (56.1%) could support the Council to deliver the library service, but when respondents were asked would they like to be involved in the running of the service, 70.6% said 'no'.

The impact of COVID-19 on communities is still unknown but emerging data and evidence shows that the COVID-19 pandemic will worsen several local indicators discussed in this needs assessment and accelerate existing inequalities within the Borough. The heaviest impact has fallen on the lives of people already experiencing health, social and economic inequalities. Additionally, the Public Health Annual Report 2020-2021 states "*that children and young people may be hit hardest by the COVID-19 control measures, which could exacerbate existing inequalities in educational* attainment"[74].

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[74] [2021 Public Health Annual Report - Wirral Intelligence Service](#)

Summary

The purpose of this needs assessment is to provide evidence and insight that can inform a plan for the future of Wirral's library service, focusing on local need. In the context of significant reductions in Council resources over coming years, an approach is required that will substantially transform the service's delivery model and delivery model options are included in a separate document.

The needs assessment lays the foundations for designing this approach in a way that meets the common design principles identified by the Libraries Taskforce for developing and transforming library services:

- meet legal requirements
- are shaped by local needs
- focus on public benefit and deliver a high-quality user experience
- make decisions informed by evidence, building on success
- support delivery of consistent England-wide core offers
- promote partnership working, innovation and enterprise
- use public funds effectively and efficiently

The Council's approach should also be led by precedent, comments made by the Secretary of State and outcomes of judicial reviews, which define the legal landscape for transformational library change.

In outlining specific needs of the Borough through demographic, socio-economic and service indicators, the assessment has identified those areas of greatest need and **appendix 8** shows a ranking table of library sites by MSOA (Middle Layer Super Output Layer) using key indicators discussed within the assessment. These needs can often show extremes across the Borough's library site areas and a contrast between demographic and socio-economic indicators, and some library service indicators. The table in **appendix 8** is an illustrative comparison tool and shows that the areas in which Beechwood, St James, Seacombe and Rock Ferry libraries are located by MSOA have the greatest need, when selecting measurables identified within this needs assessment, whilst Greasby, Pensby, West Kirby and Irby library site areas have the lowest need. Detailed MSOA profile reports are available for each of the Borough's MSOA areas (Wirral Intelligence Service[75]) in which reports show key social and economic indicators and allows further comparison of the area selected to comparator areas.

Finally, this needs assessment represents the beginning of an iterative process that will inform service redesign and delivery in respect of local need, library users and non-library users. This resource is a key decision-making tool and will ensure that targeted interventions and services are developed to support the delivery of the draft Library Strategy and its priorities, underpinned by the Universal Offers and Wirral Plan 2021-2026. Due to factors such as COVID-19 and external challenges such as reduction in available resources, any emerging future delivery model may impact local need and the indicators used within this assessment should be reviewed frequently to ensure they are relevant and will influence and drive future decision making.

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[75] Local Insight - MSOA area profile

Appendix

Appendix 1

List of activities and events held as of December 2019

Bebington Central Library
Baby Bounce & Rhyme: Thursday weekly 10.30am
Family History Helpdesk: 1st and 3rd Thursday 10- 12.30pm
Friends of Bebington Central Library: meets regularly throughout the year
Adult Reading Group: Tuesday weekly 2:00-4:00pm
Knitting Group: Friday weekly 2-4pm
Reachout work club: Tuesday weekly 10am – 12noon
Reading Group: Thursday monthly 6:15 - 7.15pm
Children's Reading Group: Thursday monthly 6-7pm
Storytime: Monday weekly 10am
Tai Chi classes: Saturday weekly 10 - 11 am
Creative Writing Group: Saturday weekly 2-4pm
Lego/board games: Saturday monthly
Film Club: Saturday monthly 2-4pm Saturday
Wirral Lifelong & Family Learning Services: varies
Reading group (HI): weekly
Mayer Trust: monthly
MacMillan Support

Beechwood Library
Reachout work club: Weekly
Councillor: 2nd Saturday of the month 10-20-11.30pm
Family Connector (InvolveNW): weekly

Birkenhead Central Library
Adult Reading Group (Shared) weekly:
Mondays 10.30am and 1.30pm,
Thursday 10.30am
Friday 11am
Baby Bounce and Rhyme: weekly 10am – 10.30am
Friends of Birkenhead Central Library: meet regularly throughout the year
Handicrafts: 1st and 3rd Saturday every month 10.30am—12.30pm
Reachout work club: Thursdays 10:00am
Reading Group: Thursday monthly 2-.15-3.30pm
Wirral Lifelong & Family Learning services: numerous courses
Age UK IT: weekly
Mencap IT courses: weekly
Baby Sing + Rhyme: monthly
Macmillan Support: by appointment daily
Remploy: weekly
Lego Club: fortnightly

Bromborough Library
Reading Group: weekly
Storytime: Monday weekly 2.15-2.45pm (volunteer)
Health walks: starting at library
Coffee morning and book sale: monthly
Reading group: monthly

Eastham Library
Adult Reading Group: Monday monthly 3.45-4.45pm
Adult Reading Group: weekly
Reachout work club: 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month 10-12 noon
Police surgery: varies
Councillor: Tuesday weekly 11-1pm

Greasby Library
Adult reading group: Thursday weekly 2-3pm
U3A reading group: Thursday monthly 10.30-12noon
Baby Bounce: Thursday weekly (term time)
Knit n natter: Thursday 3 times a month 10.30-12.30pm
Friends of Greasby Library: meet regularly throughout the year

Heswall Library
Family History Group: drop-in session 1st Monday of every month 10-1pm
Exhibitions: Heswall Library holds regular exhibitions and displays in our exhibition room
Craft group: U3A Monday monthly 10-12noon
Knit n natter: Wednesday fortnightly 10-12.30pm
Scrabble: Monday fortnightly 2-4pm

Higher Bebington
Reading Group: WI reading group monthly

Hoylake Library
Get crafty: Thursday fortnightly 2-3.30pm
In stitches: Saturday fortnightly 10.30-12noon
Reading Group: shared group weekly Monday am

Irby Library
Women's Institute: meet regularly
Friends of Irby Library: meet regularly throughout the year
Storytime: Tuesdays 2-3pm volunteer term time only
Art Group: fortnightly
Community Coffee morning: monthly
Crafty Group: fortnightly
Dementia Afternoon: monthly
Flower Club: fortnightly

Scrabble: fortnightly

Leasowe Library
Craft: weekly
Storytime: monthly

Moreton Library
Reachout work club: Monday weekly 10am
Art Class: Age UK Monday weekly 10.30am
Moreton Day care centre reading group Tuesday 1pm
Get into Reading weekly Wednesday 10am
Monthly reading group Thursday 11am
Get into reading group weekly Friday 10.30am
Storytime: Monday 9.30 weekly
Baby Bounce: Monday 10am weekly
MP surgery: Saturday monthly 10.30am
Wirral Lifelong & Family Learning services: various courses
Moreton Day Centre: Friday weekly computer courses
Ask Us Wirral: x 2 weekly

Pensby Library
Baby Bounce: Tuesday weekly 10.30-11am
Storytime: Tuesday weekly 2.15pm and weekly volunteer session
Knit n natter: Tuesday weekly 2-5pm
Reading group: 3rd Friday of the month 2-3pm and shared reading group weekly
Councillor surgery: Saturday weekly 10-11am
Friends of Pensby Library: meet regularly throughout the year
Volunteers of Pensby Library: meet regularly throughout the year

Prenton Library
Reading Group: Friday monthly 3-4.30pm and weekly
Baby Bounce: Tuesday weekly 10.30am
Reachout work club: appointment only

Rock Ferry Library
Adult Reading Group: 3rd Thursday afternoon of the month at 2pm
Adult Reading Group: Thursday weekly 10-12noon
Ferries group: Tuesday weekly 12.30-3.30pm
Career Connect: appointment only
Councillor: Fridays 4.30pm to 6.00pm
Residents Association: monthly
Ask Us Wirral CAB: twice yearly event
Wirral Lifelong Learning: limited number of courses
Saturday Club: Kids club- Lego, craft and board games

Seacombe Library
Reachout work club: Tuesday 9.30am weekly
Connexions: Tuesday and Wednesday all day
Knit n Katter: Tuesday 2.30pm weekly
Book and Breakfast (Get into Reading): Wednesday 10am weekly
Bounce & Rhyme: Tuesday 10am weekly
Friends of Seacombe Library: host a selection of daytime activities
Additional activities held outside staffed opening hours including Age UK and Wirral Lifelong Learning
Energy Projects Plus: Weekly

St James Library
Adult Reading group: Thursday weekly 10-12noon
Jolly Tots: Monday weekly
Reachout work club: Tuesday weekly 9 -10am

Upton Library
Baby bounce: Friday weekly 10.30-11.15am
Reading group: Tuesday monthly 2-3.30pm
Family History Helpdesk: Appointment only
Reachout work club: weekly 10am Tuesday

Wallasey Central Library
Get Into Reading group: 1.30pm weekly
Reading Groups:
First Monday of every month 6pm - 7pm
First Tuesday of every month 6pm - 7pm
First Thursday of every month 2-3pm
Last Thursday of every month 6.45
Family History Help Desk: 2nd and 4th Friday of every month
Friends of Wallasey Central Library: meet regularly throughout the year
Wirral Lifelong & Family Learning Services: various courses
Reachout work club: Thursday weekly 10-12noon
Baby Bounce and Rhyme: every Thursday 2.30-3pm
Storytime: every Thursday 10am -10.30am
Wallabies (craft and play): every Monday 11.00am - 12.00pm
After school storytime: every Friday 3.45-4.15pm
Spanish for children: every Thursday 4.15
Code club: 8 sessions per month (Thursday 6.30 / Saturday 11am)
Board games club monthly
Macmillan: daily by appointment
Other regular groups at Wallasey Central Library:
Crafty chatty weekly 1-3pm
Art Group weekly 10-12noon
Art Group weekly 1.30-3.30pm

French weekly 6.45-7.45
Friends of Rake Lane 1st Monday of the month
Bridge weekly 10-12noon
Remploy weekly 1-2.30pm
Film club fortnightly 7.30-9.30pm
U3A art class fortnightly 10-12noon
U3A art group monthly 2-4pm
Wallasey Historical Society 7.30-9.30pm twice monthly
Wallasey Leisure painters weekly 10-12pm
Wallasey Arts monthly 9.30-12.30

Wallasey Village Library
Baby bounce: Friday weekly 10-11am
Storytime: Monday weekly 2.30pm
Book Club: Friday monthly 11-12noon
Friends of Wallasey Village Library: meet regularly throughout the year and hold activities on days the library is not staffed. Also organise health walks from the library
Volunteer led groups: yoga, mini yoga, tai chi, gardening club, cross stich, parents together, coffee mornings

West Kirby Library
Reading/Poetry/Play/Literature groups:
Monday weekly 10-30-12noon and 1.45-3.45
Tuesday monthly 2.30-4pm
Thursday monthly 10-12 noon (U3A)
Thursday monthly 10-12noon
Thursday monthly 6-7pm
Friday weekly 10am-11.30am
Scrabble: monthly Fri 2pm and tri-monthly
Tuesday 2pm
Knit n natter: Friday weekly 10.30-12noon
Adult colouring: Wednesday weekly 10-11.30am
Creative writing: Wednesday weekly 1.45-3.45, Thursday monthly 10-12noon
Needlework: weekly Thu 2-4pm
Craft and Chat: weekly Monday 1-3pm
Art group: weekly Monday 2-4pm
Friends History Group: Tuesday weekly 10-12noon
Reachout work club: Tuesday weekly 9-10am
Family History Helpdesk: Monday monthly 10-1pm
Incredible edible: Thursday monthly 2pm
Discussion Group: "What the papers say" Thur am
Baby Bounce: Tuesday weekly 10am
Storytime: Monday weekly 2.30pm
Creative Writing (children): Tuesday and Thursday weekly 4-5.30pm
Dementia Friendly activity: 4th Monday pm
Friends of West Kirby and Hoylake Library: meet regularly throughout the year

Lego Club: Saturday pm fortnightly
Code Club: Thursday 6pm
Macmillan support: regularly

Woodchurch Library
Class Visits from school
Stories and Rhymes: weekly Friday (term time)

Appendix 2

Number of Active Borrowers per Wirral Libraries site in order of total 2019/20

Branch	2019/20
Beechwood Toy Library	58
Leasowe	221
Woodchurch	243
Beechwood	260
Home Reader Central	310
St. James	356
Prenton	460
Seacombe	618
Irby	878
Wallasey Village	911
Hoylake	976
Higher Bebington	1052
Pensby	1067
Rock Ferry	1180
Upton	1246
Eastham	1437
Bromborough	1616
Greasby	1844
Moreton	2107
Heswall	2606
Birkenhead Central	3532
Bebington Central	4088
Wallasey Central	4740
West Kirby	4826

Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Appendix 3

Age Profile of Library Service Borrowers per site 2019/20 excluding Home Reader Service, with number and percentage at each library site

	0 to 4		5 to 12		13 to 17		18 to 24		25 to 60		60+		
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Total
Bebington Central	458	11.20	1095	26.79	89	2.18	51	1.25	1057	25.86	1338	32.73	4088
Beechwood	40	15.38	87	33.46	6	2.31	4	1.54	72	27.69	51	19.62	260
Beechwood Toy Library	5	8.62	10	17.24	0	0.00	0	0.00	35	60.34	8	13.79	58
Birkenhead Central	290	8.21	755	21.38	67	1.90	109	3.09	1204	34.09	1107	31.34	3532
Bromborough	141	8.73	320	19.80	23	1.42	17	1.05	395	24.44	720	44.55	1616
Call Centre	91	9.11	175	17.52	6	0.60	6	0.60	239	23.92	482	48.25	999
Eastham	164	11.41	402	27.97	20	1.39	17	1.18	320	22.27	514	35.77	1437
Greasby	205	11.12	304	16.49	27	1.46	17	0.92	421	22.83	870	47.18	1844
Heswall	235	9.02	464	17.81	49	1.88	29	1.11	588	22.56	1241	47.62	2606
Higher Bebington	174	16.54	264	25.10	8	0.76	4	0.38	227	21.58	375	35.65	1052
Hoylake	128	13.11	208	21.31	12	1.23	8	0.82	255	26.13	365	37.40	976
Irby	107	12.19	204	23.23	13	1.48	8	0.91	194	22.10	352	40.09	878
Leasowe	30	13.57	62	28.05	3	1.36	3	1.36	73	33.03	50	22.62	221
Moreton	219	10.39	515	24.44	44	2.09	26	1.23	560	26.58	743	35.26	2107
New Ferry													
Pensby	122	11.43	223	20.90	7	0.66	9	0.84	259	24.27	447	41.89	1067
Prenton	56	12.17	120	26.09	6	1.30	9	1.96	108	23.48	161	35.00	460
Ridgeway													
Rock Ferry	131	11.10	306	25.93	17	1.44	35	2.97	383	32.46	308	26.10	1180
Seacombe	81	13.11	185	29.94	11	1.78	17	2.75	189	30.58	135	21.84	618
St. James	48	13.48	92	25.84	6	1.69	7	1.97	119	33.43	84	23.60	356
Upton	103	8.27	258	20.71	30	2.41	16	1.28	299	24.00	540	43.34	1246
Wallasey Central	491	10.36	1013	21.37	90	1.90	77	1.62	1510	31.86	1559	32.89	4740
Wallasey Village	122	13.39	207	22.72	14	1.54	12	1.32	245	26.89	311	34.14	911
West Kirby	455	9.43	921	19.08	110	2.28	67	1.39	1374	28.47	1899	39.35	4826
Woodchurch	50	20.58	62	25.51	4	1.65	6	2.47	82	33.74	39	16.05	243
Total	**3947**	**10.49**	**8256**	**21.94**	**664**	**1.76**	**554**	**1.47**	**10436**	**27.73**	**13774**	**36.60**	**37631**

Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Appendix 4

Number of events per site in order of number of activities/events that occur at least once a month as of Sept 2019-Dec 2019

	No. activity events that occur at least once a month
Higher Bebington	1
Woodchurch	4
Leasowe	5
Heswall	6
Hoylake	8
Beechwood	9
Greasby	9
Prenton	10
Upton	10
Bromborough	11
Eastham	12
St. James	12
Irby	15
Pensby	22
Wallasey Village	22
Rock Ferry	30
Seacombe	32
Bebington Central	44
Moreton	46
Birkenhead Central	54
West Kirby	79
Wallasey Central	82

Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Note: Activities including pre-school and school visits are excluded from this total as are one off events and externally funded programmes of work such as Arts Council England projects

Appendix 5

Number of items Issues/Renewals per site broken down to Adult Item and Young Person Items 2019/20

	All Adult	All Young Person	Toy Library	Sum:
Bebington Central	45682	35390	-	81072
Beechwood	1905	1867	-	3772
Beechwood Toy Library	64	41	359	464
Birkenhead Central	52141	21442	-	73583
Bromborough	21916	7892	-	29808
Call Centre	4259	2002	-	6261
Eastham	16696	10773	-	27469
Greasby	27467	13412	-	40879
Heswall	35208	17593	-	52801
Higher Bebington	8281	6555	-	14836
Home Reader - Central	13984	258	-	14242
Hoylake	10152	7986	-	18138
Irby	9774	5933	-	15707
Leasowe	917	1720	-	2637
Moreton	29710	15216	-	44926
Pensby	13661	9064	-	22725
Prenton	4734	3867	-	8601
Rock Ferry	9519	6402	-	15921
Seacombe	4172	3299	-	7471
St. James	2695	1659	-	4354
Upton	29183	11046	-	40229
Wallasey Central	94203	33752	-	127955
Wallasey Village	9094	6840	-	15934
West Kirby	68366	39356	-	107722
Woodchurch	1296	3583	-	4879
Total	**515,079**	**267,307**	**359**	**782,745**

Source: Talis Alto Library Management System

Appendix 6

PC usage per site in order of logins total 2018/19

	2018/19
Woodchurch	543
Higher Bebington	747
Prenton	802
Beechwood	859
Wallasey Village	1060
Irby	1094
Leasowe	1104
Hoylake	1121
Pensby	1437
Upton	1582
Bromborough	1857
St. James	2624
Greasby	2919
Seacombe	3918
Heswall	4895
Eastham	5492
West Kirby	10743
Rock Ferry	11062
Moreton	11136
Bebington Central	11653
Wallasey Central	14653
Birkenhead Central	15496
Total	**106797**

Source: Insight Media i-CAM

Appendix 7

Wi-Fi usage per site in order of login total 2018/19

	2018/19
Higher Bebington	116
Woodchurch	150
Hoylake	159
Upton	161
Prenton	168
Beechwood	225
Wallasey Village	257
Irby	263
Greasby	343
Pensby	408
Bromborough	428
St. James	524
Seacombe	558
Eastham	576
Leasowe	621
Heswall	1079
Moreton	1330
Rock Ferry	1747
Wallasey Central	1761
Birkenhead Central	2238
Bebington Central	2607
West Kirby (Library)	5040
Total	**20759**

Source: Cisco Meraki

Appendix 8

Table of ranking by area library is located, using MSOA data

	Index of Multiple Deprivation	% Population under 15	% Population 60+	% Households with No Car	Indices of Income Deprivation Affecting Young People (0-15 years)	Early Learning goals	Educational Attainment (8)	People with no qualifications	% Receiving Unemployment Benefits (JSA or UC)	Library PC Usage	Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERi)	Community Needs Index: Community Needs Score	Probability of Loneliness (65+)	Male Life Expectancy	Female Life Expectancy	People with mental health issues (receiving IC Benefits / ESA)	Living with a Long Term Limiting Illness (Total Population)	Library Users	Library issues	Total
Bidston Hill MSOA- BD	22	22	2	22	22	21	22	22	20	7	22	18	20	21	20	19	19	20	21	362
Bidston Hill MSOA- SJ	22	22	2	22	22	21	22	22	20	7	22	18	20	21	20	19	19	19	20	360
Seacombe MSOA- SE	21	20	4	20	21	12	21	18	23	6	21	23	17	20	20	22	17	17	18	341
Tranmere MSOA- RF	20	16	5	20	20	20	19	19	19	1	19	22	20	21	23	23	18	11	14	330
Woodchurch MSOA- WO	17	16	9	17	18	11	18	20	17	18	18	17	20	19	17	17	23	21	19	332
Leasowe South & Moreton East MSOA- LE	18	19	7	18	17	18	20	21	18	3	20	16	17	14	13	18	22	22	22	323
Birkenhead South MSOA-BI	19	21	1	19	19	17	15	15	22	2	16	15	17	18	13	21	9	4	4	267
Moreton West MSOA- MO	14	11	16	14	15	18	17	17	14	9	17	20	14	11	13	15	19	6	6	266
Noctorum North & Upton East MSOA- UP	16	18	6	16	16	21	16	16	16	13	15	14	16	14	17	14	16	10	8	278
Wallasey East MSOA- WC	15	8	8	15	14	14	14	11	15	4	14	21	15	14	17	16	15	2	1	233
Eastham MSOA- EA	13	14	11	10	12	9	12	14	9	10	12	7	12	11	9	10	9	9	10	203
Lower Bebington & Bromborough Pool MSOA- BE	10	15	10	11	11	6	9	12	7	12	13	4	12	14	13	12	2	3	3	179
Bromborough North MSOA- BR	11	8	13	13	13	4	7	13	7	14	11	11	8	5	11	13	14	8	9	193
Wallasey Village MSOA- WV	8	4	17	9	10	14	13	4	9	19	3	1	8	8	1	6	7	15	13	169
Noctorum South MSOA- RI	7	12	14	4	9	1	10	10	9	23	1	6	1	8	1	3	1	23	23	166
Prenton MSOA- PR	12	10	15	8	5	6	11	7	13	11	6	3	5	5	6	8	6	18	17	172
Hoylake MSOA- HO	5	5	18	7	2	16	5	1	6	20	2	5	5	10	11	11	4	14	12	159
Heswall MSOA- HE	4	2	21	6	3	2	1	9	4	17	8	12	8	5	10	9	13	5	5	144
Higher Bebington MSOA- HI	6	12	12	5	5	4	4	8	4	15	5	2	5	11	6	7	3	13	16	143
Thurstaston & Irby MSOA- IR	2	3	22	3	7	8	8	6	2	21	10	10	1	3	4	1	11	16	15	153
West Kirby MSOA- WK	9	7	19	12	8	9	3	3	9	5	7	9	8	3	6	4	12	1	2	136
Pensby & Thingwall MSOA- PE	3	6	20	2	4	13	2	5	2	22	4	13	1	1	1	4	8	12	11	134
Greasby MSOA- GR	1	1	23	1	1	3	6	2	1	16	9	8	1	1	4	1	5	7	7	98

Sources: Local Insight (communityinsight.org), Talis Alto Library Management System, Insight Media i-Cam
Note: The table is in-house designed using a concept from St Helens Library Service Strategy 2021-26.

The table is an illustrative comparison tool only to show the differences in need across the library site MSOA areas. The aggregate score indicates that Beechwood Library area (located in the Bidston Hill MSOA) has the greatest need, whilst Greasby Library area (located in the Greasby MSOA) has the lowest need.

Middle Layer Super Output Areas (**MSOA**) are a geographic hierarchy designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales and for the purpose of this table were felt to be the most appropriate area identifier to represent each library location area. The indicators were chosen from the needs assessment and are representative of demographic and socio-economic indicators, and library service indicators. The data was ranked according to its value and no weighting was placed on the data. It should also be noted that New Ferry Library area is not represented, and no library service indicator data was available for Ridgeway Library. The most current data available was used for all indicators, except for library indicators where 2019/20 data was used, except for PC usage data where 2018/19 was the most current complete year data set. It should also be noted that Bebington Library was closed from mid December 2019 to March 2020.

Codes for Library sites

BE- Bebington Central
BD- Beechwood
BI- Birkenhead Central
BR- Bromborough
EA- Eastham
GR- Greasby
HE- Heswall

HI- Higher Bebington
HO- Hoylake
IR- Irby
LE- Leasowe
MO- Moreton
PE- Pensby
PR- Prenton
RI- Ridgeway
RF- Rock Ferry
SE- Seacombe
SJ- St. James
UP- Upton
WC- Wallasey Central
WV- Wallasey Village
WK- West Kirby
WO Woodchurch

Appendix 9

Strategic priority 1- Reading

Objective: Offer children of all ages an opportunity to read and discover

Actions:
- Provide affordable and engaging interactive activities and resources aimed at supporting language, communication, and developmental opportunities for pre-school children
- Work in partnership with schools, focusing resources where uptake and attainment levels are lower, to demonstrate the value of creative reading activities and supported programmes that impact on literacy attainment and wellbeing
- Design, develop and review, with key partners, diverse and inclusive literacy resources, supporting programmes of work virtually, within libraries and communities, with a specific focus on targeted audiences

Objective: Provide affordable and engaging resources and activities to promote and celebrate reading for pleasure for adults

Actions:
- Use national and regional initiatives to promote reading for pleasure
- Work with community volunteers and reader development organisations to grow reading for pleasure activities and initiatives in accessible community places, ensuring they are appealing and relevant, whilst supporting resident led groups and community adhesion

Objective: Provide an engaging and diverse book stock and reading focused materials for all ages and abilities
Actions:
- Encourage resident involvement in book selection and ensure that the book stock is managed effectively to ensure greatest value and evolves to reflect local need
- Provide access (physically and remotely) to a range of inclusive and diverse books in accessible formats to allow engagement with reading, and work with partners to support adults to engage in reading
  Implement inspiring, imaginative book and reading-focused promotions within our libraries and community settings, whilst employing complementary social media campaigns

Strategic priority 2- Information and Digital

Objective: Provide a range of resources and activities that promote digital inclusion and support residents with their learning and digital skills

Actions:
- Use local and national programmes to offer digital activities to encourage digital inclusion and digital literacy, particularly in areas of identified need, using our network of staff, partners, volunteers and online resources
- Work with partners and those that have an existing presence within communities to enable individuals and communities to develop inspiring learning offers
- Seek opportunities when appropriate that invest in technological improvements for users

Objective: Provide access to quality information and digital services

Actions:

- Develop and refine our online services to ensure they are relevant and accessible
- Work with partners to assist users to choose the right sources of information
- Explore opportunities to develop and implement a digital programme to increase accessibility to local history resources
- Continue to develop an imaginative programme of workshops and exhibitions with other public services and partner organisations
- In partnership with the British Library offer a Business and IP (Intellectual Property) Centre to provide local residents and businesses free access to relevant databases and business advice

Strategic priority 3: Culture and Creativity

Objective: Provide opportunities for residents to engage in inclusive cultural and creative experiences, relevant to the local community

Actions:
- Work with partners and volunteers to develop new ways of engaging targeted groups through cultural and creative activities and events
- Explore opportunities which will support young people's participation and talent development
- Develop a marketing strategy that includes service promotion of activities and events, and the library space, to encourage cultural and creative participation by users and the wider community
- Support local cultural groups to grow by curating and promoting information about their cultural and creative community activities and events
- Being aware of opportunities, and when appropriate, support the development of creative spaces within libraries

Objective: Develop strong partnership working to deliver joined up working around culture and creativity

Actions:
- Share programmes of work with key partners including Wirral's Culture team and Liverpool City Region library authorities to identify areas of collaboration
- Being aware of opportunities for Wirral Libraries to participate in national and regional cultural initiatives and identify and maximise external funding opportunities
- Forge new partnerships with health services, further and higher education, third sector organisations and technological and commercial industries to deliver new initiatives
- Identify success stories to promote Wirral Libraries locally and further afield and apply for awards to recognise achievements and best practice to support future funding applications and partnership working

Strategic priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

Objective: Promote access to trusted information on a range of health issues including specific medical conditions and public health issues and provide self-management support

Actions:
- Innovate and share existing programmes that support physical and mental health, and develop new initiatives with volunteers, third sector and public health partners to deliver resources and services to people with physical and mental health conditions

- Continue to develop and provide accessible, high-quality health information and signpost and offer extended support for public health initiatives
- Work with key partners to provide staff and volunteers with relevant health training

Objective: Provide a range of reading opportunities and creative and social activities, which engage and connect communities, to reduce loneliness and improve wellbeing

Actions:
- Work in partnership with health colleagues and volunteers to provide activities and events that support communities with health and wellbeing outcomes •
- As part of the development of the social prescribing approach, we will work with health partners to design an offer connected to libraries that supports health and wellbeing
- Provide volunteering opportunities, whilst proactively encouraging and supporting people with health and wellbeing needs
- Seek investment where opportunities present themselves, to enhance library spaces

An implementation plan for the delivery of the strategy will be developed upon approval of the strategy document. A set of measures will be included in the plan to monitor progress and success. The delivery will be overseen by the service's Management Board and will receive quarterly reports to monitor our progress.

Progress and success will be measured in several ways including:

CIPFA key performance indicators

Strategic priority 1 - Reading
- Support reading attainment in areas of identified need
- Increase in community and resident led reading initiatives and activities in areas of identified need
- Increase in book issues for targeted areas of stock (physical and electronic)

Strategic priority 2 - Information and Digital
- Increase in uptake of library online services
- Increase in the usage of the digital collections
- Increase in engagement satisfaction and service awareness

Strategic priority 3 - Culture and Creativity
- Increase of and attendance at cultural and creative activities and events in areas of identified need
- Increase in community usage of libraries by local cultural groups in areas of identified need
- Increase in new partnerships and externally funded initiatives in areas of identified need

Strategic priority 4 - Health and Wellbeing
- Increase in health and wellbeing book issues

Increase in activities and events that have a health and wellbeing focus in areas of identified need