



Guidance

Libraries as a statutory service

Updated 23 July 2019

Contents

- [1. Introduction](#)
- [2. What the law says about public libraries](#)
- [3. Role of central government](#)
- [4. Role of councils](#)
- [5. What to do if I think a council is in breach of the Act](#)
- [6. What DCMS will and will not investigate](#)
- [7. Representations to DCMS](#)
- [8. How DCMS considers a complaint](#)
- [9. Outcome of ministerial decision](#)
- [10. Annex A: Equalities](#)
- [11. Annex B: Judicial Reviews](#)
- [12. Annex C: Support and advice from sector bodies](#)
- [13. Annex D: Learning from the Wirral Inquiry](#)

The information contained in this document is provided to help guide local councils and others. This text should not in any way be taken as formal legal advice or be used as the basis for formal council decisions. All councils should seek their own legal advice on any proposed changes they wish to make to their library service.

We'd like councils considering changing their library service to inform the DCMS Libraries team about their proposals before public engagement or consultation. Details about such proposals should be emailed to dcms-libraries@culture.gov.uk.

1. Introduction

This guidance is intended to help councils in England and others in considering library service provision as a statutory service. It sets out:

- what the law says about the public library responsibilities of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and councils
- how to make representations about whether the council is meeting its statutory duties

- the process DCMS will follow to consider formal complaints

This guidance accompanies the [Strategic planning: longer-term, evidence-based sustainable planning toolkit](#) produced by the Libraries Taskforce. That toolkit is intended to support portfolio holders, senior officers, council transformation teams and library service managers. It is designed to help users:

- undertake (or contribute to) a robust, objective and evidence-based analysis of local need
- develop a strategy to deliver a library service that will meet the needs of their local communities

The information contained in this document is provided to help guide local councils and others. This text should not in any way be taken as formal legal advice or be used as the basis for formal council decisions. All councils should seek their own legal advice on any proposed changes they wish to make to their library service.

If you have any queries about this guidance, please email dcms-libraries@culture.gov.uk.

2. What the law says about public libraries

2.1 Legislation: the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the Act)

Public library services are funded and either run or commissioned by local government. Library authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the [Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964](#) 'to provide a [comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons](#)' for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7). The Act allows for joint working between library authorities and councils may also offer wider library services (for example, loaning devices, running activities or providing access to wifi and computers).

In providing this service, councils must, among other things:

- encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b))
- lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (in accordance with section 8(3))

2.2 Other legal obligations

In drawing up and delivering their library strategies and plans, councils should

consider a number of legal obligations, including under:

- the [Equality Act 2010](#) including the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- [Best Value Duty 2011 guidance](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)
- the [Human Rights Act 1998](#)

Decisions made by councils about library services may also be subject to legal challenge by way of judicial review.

More information on these can be found in [Annex A: Equalities](#) and [Annex B: Judicial Reviews](#).

3. Role of central government

3.1 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (and other ministers on their behalf) has a duty under the Act to:

- superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by councils in England
- secure the proper discharge by councils of their functions as library authorities

The Act also provides the Secretary of State with the statutory power to intervene and call a local inquiry when a library authority fails (or is suspected of failing) to provide the required service. More information on inquiries is in [Outcome of ministerial decision](#).

DCMS is responsible for the superintendence and promoting the improvement of libraries across England. To support this duty, DCMS monitors developments in library services across England. Library services are devolved in the other UK nations. If you have concerns about library provision in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland you should raise it with the relevant Devolved Administration.

In Wales, members of the public can [contact the Welsh Government to make a complaint](#) or by [writing to the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism](#) who has a statutory duty to superintend the delivery of public libraries in Wales.

The Secretary of State does not seek to prescribe how councils discharge their statutory duty nor to defend the status quo just by virtue of it being the current provision. A wide range of approaches are open to councils when deciding how to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service.

3.2 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is responsible for the Local Government Finance Settlement. This provides funding to local government and councils receive an overall sum of money which is based on the assessment of local needs. Decisions about resource prioritisation within this (including for libraries) sit with councils, as the locally democratic and accountable body.

4. Role of councils

The [Localism Act in 2011](#) contains a wide range of measures to devolve more powers to councils and neighbourhoods and give local communities greater control over local decisions. It is for individual councils to decide how to allocate their funds.

Every council in England is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the Act. It must do so in a way which meets the needs of local library users taking into account the resources available. The public library service is not a national service, but a local service. What a comprehensive and efficient service means will differ between councils, and will depend on the needs of each area. It is therefore the role of councillors and officials at a local level to determine how much they spend on libraries and how they manage and deliver their service. This must be done:

- in consultation with their communities
- through analysis of evidence around local needs
- in accordance with their statutory duties

Councillors need to make decisions about how money is invested in the interests of the whole community. They will have competing priorities across a wide portfolio of local service provision and councillors and officers must reconcile these matters against the background of their legal requirements. Councils can take their available resources into account when deciding how to deliver their public library service.

Councils therefore have the freedom to design their library service, based on their analysis and assessment of local needs. There are no longer prescribed national standards, which risked ignoring the specific circumstances or needs of individual library authorities.

Library authorities are also required to provide DCMS with such information as the Secretary of State may require for carrying out their duties.

We'd like councils considering changing their library service to inform the DCMS Libraries team about their proposals before public engagement or consultation. Details about such proposals should be emailed to dcms-libraries@culture.gov.uk.

This will help by:

- providing early sight of proposals and assisting DCMS in the superintendence role
- giving the council an opportunity to talk through its early thinking or proposals with

the DCMS Libraries team

Library authorities should be able to demonstrate:

- plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any 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 coming to a decision about future library provision DCMS will expect the council to act reasonably and rationally. A council looking to introduce changes to their library service provision should consider a number of things, including the following.

4.1 Evidence that proposals would continue to meet local needs

A council must be able to evidence the link between the design and delivery of its library service and identifiable local need. They:

- will already hold much of the data on local needs that they can use in considering their statutory compliance
- need to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (and the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share certain protected characteristics and those who do not), which will involve an analysis and assessment of the equality implications of the proposals
- should engage with the community when designing the library service to meet local needs within the available resources

4.2 Strategic planning of any changes

Library strategies should include a clear vision for the library service, outlining what the service should achieve and deliver. Points to include or consider are:

- how well the strategy meets local needs, now and in the future, using documented evidence held locally, as well as members and officers' local knowledge
- an assessment of the equality impact on all 'protected groups' as specified in the Equality Act 2010
- a careful consideration of feedback received before making a definitive decision
- a demonstration of how steps have been taken to mitigate the impact
- an openness to new options
- another consultation before implementing changes
- an investment in working with communities and other partners to put new solutions in place, drawing on learning from elsewhere

More information on strategic planning can be found in the [Strategic planning of library services toolkit](#) published by the Libraries Taskforce.

Alternative delivery models

Councils should regularly review how they provide library services so they remain effective and efficient. In line with broader public sector reform, councils should actively examine alternative delivery models and revenue streams. These could unlock additional investment and exploit opportunities for joint working with other councils and/or partners to maintain and enhance service delivery.

The Optimo partnership, on behalf of the Libraries Taskforce and DCMS, designed an [alternative delivery models toolkit](#). This supports library service managers, council commissioners, transformation teams, councillors, Friends Groups and community groups considering alternative delivery models. The toolkit demonstrates and describes a staged approach to investigation and establishment. It also describes the characteristics and potential advantages or disadvantages associated with each type of alternative delivery model.

Use of council scrutiny process

Depending on an individual council's constitution, its Overview and Scrutiny Committees may play a role in actively reviewing local library provision through pre-decision scrutiny, helping to advise the portfolio holder (an Executive member of a council cabinet) responsible for the library service as policy is developed. It could, for example, take evidence from local library users and other stakeholders to develop recommendations on how the service might be redesigned and adapted to changing circumstances.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can also provide internal challenge to proposals which contain significant changes to library services before they go to the portfolio holder for a formal decision. They do this by examining the underlying rationale of the proposal and if necessary suggesting alternative approaches that could be explored prior to decision.

Once a formal decision is taken, councillors may also be able to use call-in powers to raise any outstanding issues or concerns; for example to challenge the assumptions and evidence behind decisions. Call-in provides a mechanism for councillors to intervene where they feel that a decision being made by the executive needs to be revisited (or possibly changed). It provides a significant check and balance in the leader/cabinet system of governance.

More information is available in the Local Government Association's publication [Scrutiny for Councillors](#) or via the [Centre for Public Scrutiny](#) which provides guidance on a variety of aspects of scrutiny.

4.3 Support and advice from DCMS and sector bodies

When reviewing library service provision, councils should seek early advice from DCMS and other sector bodies if they are contemplating major changes to the service. More information on this is set out at [Annex C: support and advice from](#)

[sector bodies](#).

Councils may also wish to look for examples of how others have approached their service redesign and in particular, to explore the scope for closer collaboration across their region.

Public consultation on proposals

One of the 7 Design principles set out in [Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries 2016 to 2021](#) says that library services should:

“ co-design and co-create their services with the active support, engagement and participation of their communities so services are accessible and available to all who need them”

A consultation needs to:

- occur when proposals are formative and still at an early stage
- clearly define the scope for stakeholder input, which must be meaningful
- give sufficient information about the proposals to ensure that those consulted understand the issues and can give informed responses
- give adequate time for consideration and response
- factor in the time taken for the different stages of local processes

Responses to consultation should be taken into account when finalising any proposal and an explanation given of how these responses have informed the proposal.

More information on consultations can be found in the [strategic planning toolkit](#), which includes good practice guidance from the [Local Government Association](#).

5. What to do if I think a council is in breach of the Act

If you think a council is in breach of its duties under the Act you can:

- respond to the council's consultation on its library service proposals
- engage with the council in other ways, in addition to this formal consultation process - for example by attending, and raising questions at council meetings
- make an official complaint to the Secretary of State (see sections below)

Individuals or groups can also challenge the lawfulness of a council decision (whether due to a breach of the Act or for other reasons) through a Judicial Review (see [Annex B: Judicial Reviews](#) for more information).

6. What DCMS will and will not investigate

DCMS does not treat all representations concerning changes to library service provision, including closures, as a formal complaint within the scope of section 10(1)(a) of the Act.

DCMS will not treat representations raised as a formal complaint:

- which are trivial, vexatious or a repeated request
- where the council has not made a final decision on library service provision (for example proposals are still under discussion or still at consultation stage)
- which only deal with the impact on an individual

DCMS will consider investigating:

- following a final decision taken by the council on library service provision
- a representation about the effect of the proposals on overall area provision
- a representation about the library service as a whole (to look, for example, beyond changes to library buildings)
- a representation about the effect of proposed changes on particular groups within the community, such as those sharing a protected characteristic set out in the Equality Act (see [Annex A: Equalities](#)).

If DCMS decides to investigate a complaint, the process of doing so does not halt the implementation of any decision the council has made. It is for the council to decide whether or not to continue with the implementation of the changes to the library service, before the outcome of the Secretary of State's consideration of the complaint and determination as to whether or not to order a local inquiry.

7. Representations to DCMS

7.1 What is useful to include in any representation

Anybody can complain to DCMS about library service provision in a particular council. You do not have to be a resident of that council. If you complain on somebody's behalf you should have their permission or a right to act for them.

Your representation should outline clearly why you consider the council is not meeting its statutory duty. It should:

- be specific by:
 - stating the precise issues that you think means the library service provision is not comprehensive and efficient
 - referencing section 10 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (the section of the Act that refers to a complaint)
- indicate which of the factors DCMS considers in relation to a complaint that you think the complaint relates to (these are listed in [assessing how the council made a decision](#))

- explain the impact that you consider the agreed changes will have upon the overall statutory library service to be provided by the council
- be backed up by evidence or examples
- outline your previous engagement with the council on this issue

7.2 Submitting a representation

You can submit your representation to DCMS in writing via:

- a letter, addressed to the Secretary of State, DCMS, 100 Parliament Street, London SW1A 2BQ
- email, addressed to enquiries@culture.gov.uk

If DCMS decides your representation should be treated as a formal complaint under the Act, as part of its investigation it may ask you or your organisation for more information.

There is no set timescale for dealing with complaints. This will depend on a number of factors, such as:

- the complexity of the case
- any changes made by the council to the library service provision as the investigation progresses
- the number of formal complaints that the DCMS Libraries team is handling at a particular time
- whether or not the council's decision is also being challenged by way of judicial review

[Final decisions are published on GOV.UK](#). These name the original complainant.

8. How DCMS considers a complaint

8.1 Initial information gathering

Once DCMS has decided that a representation should be treated as a formal complaint under the Act, the department (minister or officials) writes to the council to notify them of its investigation. The letter also confirms that DCMS needs to collate all the relevant information regarding the agreed changes to the library services, and asks the council to provide this. A copy of the letter is published on [GOV.UK](#).

8.2 Engagement with the council

DCMS officials will discuss the council's proposals with it in more detail and ask questions. This may be through a visit or over the phone.

8.3 Assessing how the council made a decision

There is no definition in the Act of what constitutes a “comprehensive and efficient service”. The department's view is that a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ library service is one that best meets local need in the context of available resources and so there is no absolute or uniform standard prescribed. DCMS will consider each complaint on its own merits following careful consideration of a number of factors. These include:

- if there is any serious doubt or uncertainty that the council is (or may cease to be) complying with its legal obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service
- if the council appears to be acting in a careless or unreasonable way
- if the decision is (or may be outside) the proper bounds of the council's discretion, such as a capricious decision to stop serving a particularly vulnerable group in the local community
- if the council appears to have failed to consult affected individuals or to carry out significant research into the effects of its proposals
- if the council has failed to explain, analyse or properly justify its proposals
- if the local proposals are likely to lead to a breach of national library policy
- the advantages of decision making by expert and democratically accountable local representatives
- if there is any other good reason why a local inquiry should be ordered

DCMS will consider the complaint and all the presented evidence in the context of the above factors. However the overarching question for the Secretary of State is whether the public library service provided by the council remains “comprehensive and efficient”.

8.4 Providing advice to ministers

After considering the complaint and analysing the evidence, DCMS officials put advice and recommendations to ministers to consider. After that, the Secretary of State issues a letter which indicates whether or not they are minded to order a public inquiry.

8.5 Issuing a ‘Minded to’ decision

The council and the complainant are notified of the ‘minded to’ decision via a [letter which is also published on GOV.UK](#). This letter:

- indicates whether or not the Secretary of State is minded to order a public inquiry
- outlines the factors considered (as described above)
- provides reasons for the decision
- invites any further representations, including from interested parties

8.6 Considering further representations and making a final decision

DCMS officials analyse and consider any additional or new representations made by the council, the complainant or any interested parties, before further advice and recommendations are provided to ministers about a final decision.

After the Secretary of State has considered the advice and recommendations, a final decision letter is issued to the Leader of the council, copied to the original complainant and published on GOV.UK.

8.7 What will happen if the council changes its decision before DCMS finalises its investigation

In some circumstances, a council may reverse or change its decision on library services and may re-consult on new proposals. For example, if judicial review proceedings result in the council's decision being quashed by the court. In these circumstances, DCMS may seek to discontinue its investigation into the complaint. This will be on the basis that the underlying decision which the complaint is based on is no longer in effect and the council intends to make a new decision.

If this happens, the Secretary of State will send a minded to letter to the council (copied to the complainant) indicating that DCMS intends to discontinue its investigation and giving the opportunity for the complainant to make any additional representations. This will be followed by a final decision letter, after consideration of any representations by the complainant. Of course, it is open to the complainant to make a further complaint in respect of any fresh decision by the council.

For example, DCMS [discontinued its investigation into a complaint](#) against Northamptonshire County Council in January 2019. This was after the council's previous decision was quashed by the court following judicial review proceedings, and the council undertook a new consultation about its library service.

9. Outcome of ministerial decision

9.1 Do nothing

If the Secretary of State considers that the public library service provided by the council remains “comprehensive and efficient” and that an inquiry is not appropriate, the Secretary of State takes no further action and the complaint is closed.

9.2 Order a local inquiry

Under the Act, the Secretary of State can order a local inquiry when a library authority fails (or is suspected of failing) to provide the required service. They could choose to do this either:

- following a complaint that a library authority is failing to carry out its statutory duties (although they do not have to do so)
- of their own motion (section 10 of the Act)

A local inquiry is subject to the [Public Libraries \(Inquiries Procedure\) Rules 1992](#). This lays out the various processes and deadlines which must be followed by the department and the person appointed by the Secretary of State to hold the inquiry. The Secretary of State will:

- notify the council of their decision to hold an inquiry
- appoint an independent chair to hold the inquiry (referred to as an ‘appointed person’ in the procedure rules)
- publish the date of the inquiry

DCMS will also publish the Terms of Reference for the inquiry.

The chair of the inquiry will:

- agree the timetable
- ask for evidence (or statements of case) from those who wish to present evidence to the inquiry
- hold the inquiry
- write a report which includes their conclusions and recommendations (or reasons for not making any recommendations), which forms the basis for a decision [by the Secretary of State]

This power to order a local inquiry has been used on only one occasion since 1964, with a [public inquiry in Wirral](#) in 2009. For more information, see [Annex D: Learning from the Wirral Inquiry](#).

Recommendations of a local inquiry

Once an inquiry has closed, the chair will submit a report to the Secretary of State which sets out their conclusions and recommendations or their reasons for not making any recommendations.

The Secretary of State will share this with all participants in the inquiry. They will then make a decision based on the recommendations and notify all parties.

If the Secretary of State considers that there has been a failure by the library authority

to meet its statutory duties, they may make an order declaring this and directing the library authority to carry out any actions required to meet the duties within a specified time.

If in the meantime the council takes action to reflect the recommendations of the inquiry, as long as the Secretary of State is satisfied with the council's subsequent actions to implement these, then the complaint will be closed.

If the council fails to comply with any requirement of the order, the Secretary of State, instead of enforcing the order may make an order providing that the function of the council relating to the public library service shall be transferred to the Secretary of State.

10. Annex A: Equalities

Every council in England is required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service under the Act. Alongside the Act, councils must also comply with other legal obligations, such as under equalities legislation.

10.1 The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

The [Equality Act 2010](#) states that public bodies must have "due regard" to a variety of equalities objectives, such as the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not (Equality Act 2010, Section 149). This is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85041/equality_duty.pdf).

There are 9 protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion and belief
- gender
- sexual orientation

Complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty

Complying with the PSED ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work - in shaping policy, delivering services, and in

relation to their own employees.

Consequently, equality analysis and assessment must be carried out to demonstrate that decision-makers are fully aware of the impact that changes may have on users.

In assessing the needs of local communities, councils can provide evidence on usage analysed by protected groups, by ward and catchment area. They can also provide a comparative analysis of needs to understand the implications of any relocation of library facilities on vulnerable communities.

In applying the PSED, possible data sets could include:

- school and pupil performance measures, for example GCSE exam results
- indices of multiple deprivation such as health domain data which is aggregated to ward level and crime data
- perception data (including satisfaction with the local area as a place to live and percentage of people getting on well with one another)
- unemployment rates at ward level
- free school meals
- accessibility of the ward - analysed by public transport

In making an assessment of local need, major factors will vary according to the type of locality (urban compared to rural areas) but could include:

- rural isolation
- distance from services and implications for service spread and cost
- broadband coverage
- access to transport
- areas of socio-economic inequality

In all cases, councils should consider methods for mitigating adverse impact.

The PSED should be considered by councils at all stages of bringing forward library proposals, and should be demonstrably embedded in the decision-making process.

11. Annex B: Judicial Reviews

Decisions by library authorities may be challenged by any interested person, through judicial review.

During a judicial review, the courts will examine the council's decision and the process the council took in reaching that decision, including the council's approach to equality considerations.

11.1 Learning from judicial reviews

Sue Charteris, who carried out the public inquiry of Wirral in 2009 for the government,

suggested that to gain an understanding on how local authorities could interpret ‘comprehensive and efficient’ it might be helpful for councils to study previous judicial reviews. She summarised her thoughts in a 2013 presentation, [Creating a comprehensive library service - getting the equality duty right](#).

For example, the following observations have been made in judicial review of libraries decisions made by councils.

Mr Justice Collins in the High Court case of *Draper v Lincolnshire County Council* in 2014 EWHC 2388 (Admin) said:

“ I should consider what is required to provide a comprehensive and efficient service within the meaning of s 7 of the 1964 Act. I can, I think, do no better than cite the following observations of Ouseley J in *Bailey v London Borough of Brent* [2011] EWHC 2572 (Admin):”

“ A comprehensive service cannot mean that every resident lives close to a library. This has never been the case. Comprehensive has therefore been taken to mean delivering a service that is accessible to all residents using reasonable means, including digital technologies. An efficient service must make the best use of the assets available in order to meet its core objectives and vision, recognising the constraints on council resources. Decisions about the Service must be embedded within a clear strategic framework which draws upon evidence about needs and aspirations across the diverse communities of the borough.”

Mr Justice Collins also drew on previous judicial reviews and elaborated on comprehensive and efficient in a county setting.

“ The key is reasonable ability to access the service by all residents of the county. This means that distances and time taken to reach a library must be reasonable and any particular problems, whether physical disabilities, or created by age or family considerations, must be capable of being met.”

Also confirmed in the High Court in *R (Green) v Gloucestershire City Council* [2011] EWHC 2687 (Admin)

“ the availability of resources is highly material to the question of what constitutes a comprehensive and efficient library service. The section 7 duty cannot be exempt or divorced from resource issues and cannot in law escape the reductions which have been rendered inevitable in the light of the financial crisis engulfing the country.”

12. Annex C: Support and advice from sector bodies

To complement the Taskforce [toolkits](#), a number of Libraries Taskforce members - DCMS Libraries Team, Arts Council England (ACE), Libraries Connected, CILIP, Chief Culture and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA) and Local Government Association (LGA) - can provide guidance or support to councils that ask them for help or advice about reviewing their public library services and strategies.

12.1 DCMS Libraries team

The team aims to support councils in providing and improving public library services in their areas. It advocates for public libraries across central government and undertakes other libraries policy work.

The team will respond to requests for discussions or visits as councils are developing proposals for future libraries provision, and will help councils by clarifying expectations about what evidence the council needs to have considered in bringing forward proposals that will allow it to continue to meet its statutory duties.

This team assists the Secretary of State with their statutory superintendence role - ensuring that councils are fulfilling their legal duties. It does this by handling and investigating complaints made about proposed changes to library services on behalf of the Secretary of State.

DCMS Libraries team:

- email: dcms-libraries@culture.gov.uk
- [webpage](#)
- blog: <https://dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk>
- Twitter: [@DcmsLibraries](https://twitter.com/DcmsLibraries)

12.2 Arts Council England (ACE)

The Arts Council is the national development agency for public libraries in England. From December 2018 it took on the secretariat functions for the Libraries Taskforce.

It stimulates debate, and advocates for public libraries to local and central government and other external partners, and offers support for the development of public libraries. ACE works with the leaders of library services and other partners and stakeholders, using its influence and convening power to help shape the future development of public libraries in England. It does not hold any statutory responsibilities for public libraries.

It also funds:

- [Libraries Connected](#), as a Sector Support Organisation
- cultural activity in public libraries through its [National Portfolio Organisation programme](#) and its National Lottery Project Grant programme
- development projects which enhance the library offer (for example the [peer challenges](#) programme provided through the Local Government Association)

ACE recognises that public libraries play a broad role in their communities and takes particular interest in the ways that library spaces can be used to connect the public with other arts and cultural activities.

Arts Council England:

- email: enquiries@artscouncil.org.uk

- [supporting libraries webpage](#)
- Twitter: [@ace_national](#)

12.3 Libraries Connected

Libraries Connected (formerly the Society of Chief Librarians) is the membership body open to all public library services in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

It is funded by Arts Council England as the [Sector Support Organisation for public libraries](#), with a focus on shaping a positive operating environment for libraries, fostering innovation and sharing good practice across the sector. Its core asset is its members' wealth of expertise as library leaders and practitioners, and their willingness to share this with their peers. It also leads on national and regional funding bids for libraries, with a focus on delivering public programmes within its [Universal Offer framework](#).

The support it offers for individual library services includes: Brokering expert peer advice and support via its [regional and Universal Offer networks Training and skills development courses and online modules Toolkits](#) curated from a wide range of courses, and in response to common strategic challenges Advocacy to senior managers, elected members and other stakeholders Partnership brokering Strategic advice

Libraries Connected:

- email: info@librariesconnected.org.uk
- [website](#)
- Twitter: [@libsconnected](#)

12.4 CILIP, the libraries and information association

CILIP is the UK's library and information association. It represents 12,500 librarians and information professionals in more than 20 industry sectors. CILIP's mission is to inspire librarians and information professionals to change lives. In addition to professional services to members and ongoing support for employers (library authorities), it provides the following support for the public library sector:

- independent, sector-led advocacy, including the Secretariat of the [Libraries All-Party Parliamentary Group](#)
- media relations, press and public affairs work, including campaigns to highlight the value and impact of libraries and librarians
- [training and skills development](#) for both individuals and employers
- specific [legal and careers advice services](#) for librarians
- [accreditation, certification and qualifications](#) for both individuals and employers

CILIP also provides advice to library authorities considering making, or consulting on, changes to library services. These discussions are confidential, and it is able to

connect service leads with experienced professional librarians to discuss key issues, including the development of library service strategies and plans.

CILIP:

- email: information@cilip.org.uk
- [website](#)
- Twitter: [@CILIPinfo](#)

12.5 Local Government Association

The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice for local government in England and Wales, working with councils to support, promote and improve local government. The LGA provides a range of [practical support](#), on a free of charge and/or subsidised basis, to enable councils to exploit the opportunities that this approach to improvement provides.

For library services, this work includes:

Peer challenges

[Peer challenges](#), funded by ACE, for which library services can apply. A peer challenge is a process commissioned by a council and involves a small team of local government officers and councillors spending time at the council as peers to provide challenge and share learning. They can be tailored to local needs and provide an impartial review of library/cultural provision or future plans for services.

Culture Leadership Essentials courses

[Culture Leadership Essentials courses](#) are also funded by ACE and provide training for councillors with a portfolio which includes libraries and culture. These advise councillors on how best to manage these services, improve their leadership skills and explore case studies of innovative work within the sector, including library services.

Commercialisation support and training

The [commercialisation support](#) includes training for officers; commercial skills masterclasses for councillors; and a pool of commercial and productivity experts who will work with your organisation to help you achieve your goals, delivering efficiency savings or income.

Good practice guidance

Good practice guidance, including a [councillor handbook](#) on running a library service, which sets out ways to ensure a library service excels and meets the needs of its communities. A selection of case studies from various councils can also be found on the [Culture Hub](#), covering leadership, new delivery models including trusts, and using new technology.

E-bulletin

A monthly [e-bulletin](#) which summarises the important issues in the cultural sector and provides an update on LGA work.

Other support available for officers includes [training on commercialisation] (<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/commercialisation/commercial-skills-training-officers>).

LGA:

- email: cts@local.gov.uk
- [website](#)
- Twitter: [@LGAculturesport](#)

12.6 Chief Cultural and Leisure Officers Association (CLOA)

CLOA represents senior strategic leaders managing public sector cultural, libraries, tourism and sport services. It welcomes working collaboratively with all organisations with an interest in any aspect of public libraries' work.

CLOA supports the sector on library improvement initiatives; a significant number of its members manage library services. CLOA supports the LGA/ACE library peer challenges, by providing a practitioner perspective and acting as a critical friend to libraries around the country.

CLOA:

- [website](#)
- [blog](#)
- Twitter: [@cCLOAssociation](#)

These organisations may also point enquirers to individuals and/or library services that may have the experience and expertise to help with or contribute to aspects of this work, or provide comments on any proposals being considered.

12.7 Community Managed Libraries Network

This network was established to give community managed libraries (or groups considering taking on this role), and councils considering this model, access to advice and peer support from others who have already pursued this option.

Community Managed Libraries Network:

- [website and blog](#)
- Twitter: [@communitylibs](#)

13. Annex D: Learning from the Wirral Inquiry

In 2009, the then Secretary of State asked Sue Charteris (public policy consultant and former Chief Executive of the London Borough of Merton) to conduct an [inquiry into the public library service provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council](#) (the Charteris review).

The Charteris Review made a number of general observations about the statutory duties under the 1964 Act and reached particular conclusions about the library proposals in Wirral. The inquiry:

“ accepted the implicit and explicit interpretation of the 1964 Act that a comprehensive and efficient service is one that is based on local needs (hence why there can be no single definition which is true to all library authorities in England).”

The Charteris Review concluded that:

“ if those needs are not fully assessed and taken into account, it becomes a rational impossibility for a library authority to design a service which comprehensively and efficiently meets those needs in a demonstrable way.”

However in designing its library service a council is required “to balance resources with local needs”.

DCMS encourages library authorities to consider the Charteris Review’s findings when developing their library strategy and particularly when considering significant changes to library provision.

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