

It's been another busy few months for our libraries. Here is a summary of July to December 2024

Supporting communities – people and place

- over 222,000 visits were made across South Gloucestershire libraries between July and December 2024
- our friendly, knowledgeable staff members answered over 40,000 enquiries on a wide range of subjects
- all of our libraries provide or host regular groups for adults from reading groups crafting to knitting to coffee mornings. They all offer a warm welcome and free tea and coffee
- our children's activities are not only a fun and free sessions but also help them learn to socialise and enjoy books while enabling parents to meet other parents, providing an invaluable support network
- Filton once again took part in the in Wonderful Windows Trail around Filton and in December Bradley Stoke's Knit, Stitch, and Natter group created a Christmas tree out of knitted hats which were then donated to a homeless organisation; Staple Hill Library stayed opened longer hours as part of Christmas on The Hill; while Winterbourne Library hosted an event for people to learn about making their homes more environmentally friendly.

"Thank you for a wonderful 2024! You have been a staple in our lives this year and have always been so kind with each visit. Looking forward to Rhyme Time in 2025. "

(Christmas message from an Emersons Green Library family)

Health and wellbeing

- our Libraries have continued to support public health campaigns with book displays including stopping smoking, men's health and relationship support
- the weekly Tea, Talk and Stories group at Patchway continues to provide a welcome morning of company and chat
- our *Books on Prescription* offer continues - a range of books on topics such as Dementia and Teenage Mental Health – recommended by medical professionals.



"Great staff and services, clean, modern, well equipped. Open Access allows additional unattended access which is great."

(Google Review, Bradley Stoke)

Resources and support - learning, information and digital skills

- in Summer 2024 our new Library Management (Computer) System went live. This will provide a more attractive and intuitive system for staff and users, as well as make our book reservation system more efficient by avoiding stock having to travel so far to satisfy requests
- Digital Champions are our volunteers who give free one-to-one support sessions to help those who need to feel more confident using the internet and online services such as the NHS App. We have Digital Champions in most of our libraries. Some libraries also host IT Classes for beginners or those looking to return to work
- BorrowBox, our e-resources platform, now includes more than 1100 magazine titles that are free to download each month as well as e-books, e-audio books and e-newspapers all from one app
- in September we launched Wi-Fi print, making it easier for users to send documents direct to our printers.



Giving children the best start in life - children, young people and families

- **Summer Reading Challenge 2024, *Marvellous Makers*** was a huge success. **5,700** children aged 4 -11 years in South Gloucestershire took part, helping maintain their reading over the summer holidays and were rewarded with lots of incentives, including those ever-popular smelly stickers! **Once again, the number of children participating in South Gloucestershire was the highest across all the library authorities in the South West**

Parents continue to tell us how important this scheme is:

"This is a very great challenge and encourages the kids to read more. The staff were friendly and helpful."

"The 2024 Summer Reading Challenge is a life saver. We have had the opportunity to read books together as parent to our kids. They look forward to these moments and enjoy reading so much more."

"Great idea for the children. Both children love coming to the library. Gives me a chance to socialise with other mums!"

Chair of South Gloucestershire Council, councillor Franklin Owusu-Antwi, and cabinet member with responsibility for libraries, councillor Sean Rhodes attended the Celebration Event at Bradley Stoke Library that marked the finale of the challenge in South Gloucestershire, awarding some of those who finished with their certificates

- each library also hosted a **Puppetry workshop**, all of which sold out, parents commented:

"Absolutely brilliant workshop" The activity was explained and accessible. Eleanor was positive and enthusiastic whilst also being in control of the room. My children were completely engaged. Thank you for producing such a wonderful event!"

- Patchway Library's weekly Stay and Play sessions for pre-school children and parents are going well as is Art Club for primary school children at Filton and Bradley Stoke Libraries.



Reading, literacy and culture

- the 4 year **My Library Card** initiative completed a third year, giving all school children in reception and year 6 their own personalised library cards. We aim to address the attainment gap and ensure all children have access to the benefits of free reading materials and library services. Poet Laureate of Wales Alex Wharton visited Cadbury Heath and Emersons Green libraries to entertain these pupils with his poems and encourage them to use libraries.
- Family Theatre @ Yate Library is a collaboration with leading theatre companies, bringing high quality, inclusive theatre shows open to children, young people and families from across South Gloucestershire and funded by a grant from the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Our 2024 Autumn program included Sold Out shows of *The Snow Mouse*, direct from the Egg Theatre at Bath Theatre Royal
- alongside this project we expanded our theatre offer to local schools with **Little Red Riding Could**, which visited four other libraries, including Bradley Stoke. This was performed by the Roustabout, the award-winning Bristol based theatre company. The reactions of teachers who attended included these comments:

*"This linked really well to the **work we are doing in school on diversity, equity and inclusion.**"*

*"Great message about expectations **This is something we talk about in PSHE.**"*

*"**Engaging and thought provoking but at an age-appropriate level, allowing the children to question gender roles, really fantastic message to do what you love, enjoy most and to follow your own path.**"*

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www.southglos.gov.uk/libraries

From 4 November 2024, the number of staffed hours were reduced however our libraries have remained open on the same days as they were. The staffed opening hours for each library were selected following a twelve-week public consultation, to ensure libraries remain as accessible as possible to the community, while helping to meet the ongoing budgetary constraints faced by the council.

Coming soon

- the newly extended Children's Area at Emersons Green Library will be opening in March 2025



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