

Essex Libraries Project

The Research

AIM

In 2018, Essex County Council's Research & Citizen Insight team carried out research to discover what people want and need from a library service.

A key component of this included discovering how we could create a library service that is fit for today and for the future.



273

library users participated in face-to-face interviews across 22 Essex libraries. Interviews proved to be insightful as they provided a local perspective of the different libraries.

3000

people were involved in our county-wide postal survey. This enabled us to understand the needs and views of both users and non-users at a representative level.

7 telephone interviews were carried out with library volunteers, to find out about their experiences.

5

focus groups were conducted with children and young people from both mainstream and special schools. This was done to encapsulate the views of those who were unlikely to be represented in the survey.



Key Findings

- Library usage goes up and down throughout people's lives, based around their free time and level of need
- Libraries hold a pivotal role in the lives of individuals and their respective communities
- There are a range of factors that motivate people to go to the library, not just books!
- Younger people feel libraries are not designed and delivered to meet their needs, for example opening hours do not extend to evenings
- The layout of a library space is important to many users who feel that it sets the tone of how people use the space

Reasons for visiting libraries:



Books and learning



Quiet space



Information & support



Socialising



WiFi & computers



Shelter & safety



Pass time



Child activities

Impact

Areas of opportunity identified through the research include:

- Targeting and tailoring services to new generations of younger users
- Maximising layout of library spaces
- Strategic communications and marketing for targeted demographic groups
- Growing volunteering interest and capacity
- Events and community activities

The findings from this research are now being used to inform a draft strategy for the future of the library service, which has people's needs at its' heart.



You have all these groups of people from all walks of life. Everyone thinks the library is a safe place, and they respect it. The library should be the hub of the community, not just a building for books.



Library User