

# LIBRARY USER CASE STUDIES

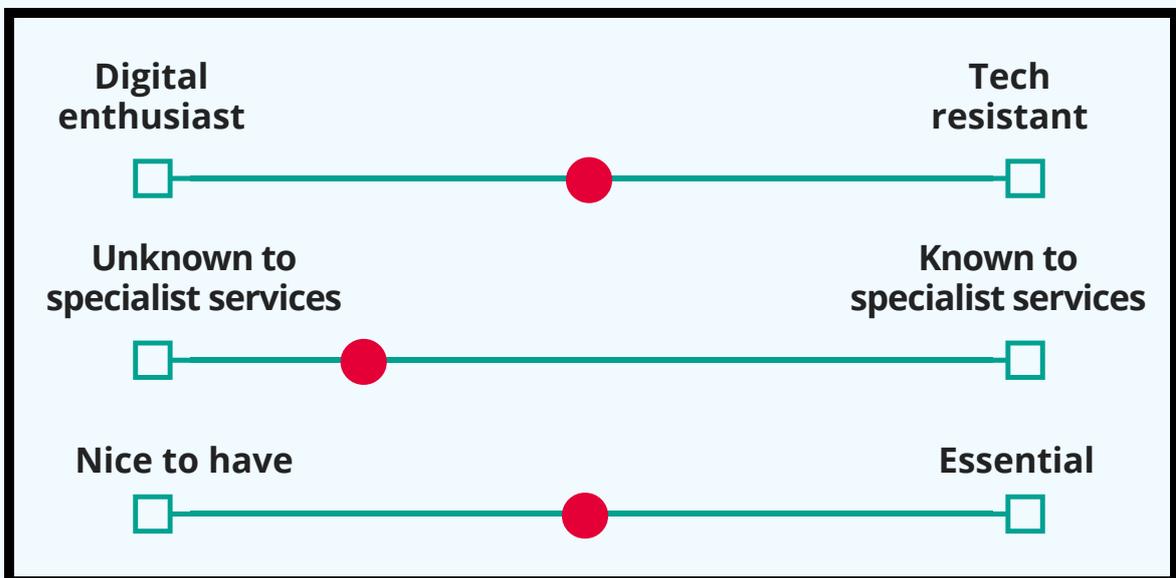
Based on the 300+ participants who took part in this face-to-face research we have created 17 case studies to describe who tends to be a member of a library in Essex, why they use the library and their general characteristics.

These case studies are based on some of the types of library users you might find, and were created as a way of visually representing the diversity of our library users. They are not designed to be a definitive list of all types of users.

Based on national research we have also created a non-user case study.



The case studies include the three sliding scales shown below:



This provides an indication as to the users' level of access and aptitude for technology, how likely they are to be known to specialist services (such as mental health support, social care etc), and their level of need for library services (being mindful of their likely access/means to alternative resources).

Again, this simply provides an indication of characteristics and is based on our observations and conversations with library users.

# Library User 1

## ETHEL

OLDER PERSON, A FREQUENT VISITOR  
TO HER LOCAL LIBRARY TO RENEW,  
BROWSE AND RETURN BOOKS.

### Ethel



Older person, a frequent visitor to her local library to renew, browse and return physical books.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

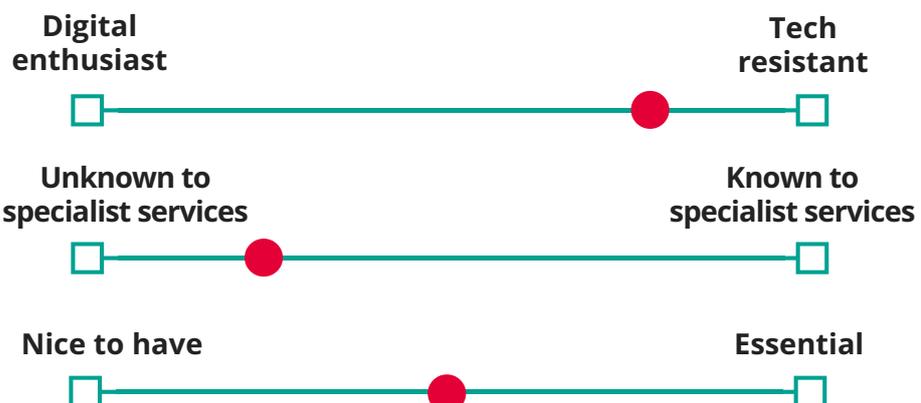
*Books. Independence.  
Pass time. Socialising.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue (staff) ✓
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 75+, typically female and likely to be widowed - very elderly and potentially at risk of social isolation
- The library forms part of Ethel's weekly routine to renew, browse, and return books
- Ethel knows other regular users of the library and people in the community - users are also likely to know library staff on a first name basis, and value well-informed staff
- Preference for talking to staff/volunteers rather than self-serve – values human contact
- They are highly unlikely to use computers, and may be resistant to technology
- Some users rely on family or social contacts for transport to the library, as they have limited mobility
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*



# Library User 2

## VALERIE

RECENTLY RETIRED, A FREQUENT VISITOR TO HER LOCAL LIBRARY TO USE THE BOOKS AND SOCIALISE WITH OTHERS.

### Valerie



Recently retired, a frequent visitor to her local library to use the books and socialise with others.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Socialising. Group activities. Volunteering. Books.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers ✓
5. Events/activities ✓
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 60+, typically female and retired
- Part of an informal group of older people using the library for leisure and social purposes - they have ample time for leisure activities
- Multi-site user of library services, and likely to browse local information
- Valerie enjoys interaction with staff and will pop in to say hello even if not accessing library services. Possibly attending a Knit & Natter group
- Might have grandchildren whom they bring to use the children's library
- Might occasionally use the ancestry online computer programme
- The library offers a convenient and neutral space to bring people together e.g. for playing cards
- They are community champions - active community members likely to volunteer with libraries and other organisations
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 3

## MEL

WORKING AGE, FIRST-TIME MUM  
ON MATERNITY LEAVE USING  
CHILDREN'S LIBRARY SERVICES  
AND ACTIVITIES.

### Mel



Working age, first-time mum on maternity leave using children's library services and activities.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Children's activities. Socialising.  
Education/learning. Books.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities ✓
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged between 30-40, mum with young children. Likely to have a good income, be married and own their home
- Typically using library services while on maternity leave from a professional job
- Attends Rhyme Time sessions at specific times each week across several libraries local to them - part of weekly routine
- They might borrow a children's book as a by-product of using the services, but Rhyme Time is the primary reason for visit
- Library activities offer an opportunity to get out of the house, socialise and make friends with mums in a similar position. Mums who attend Rhyme Time may also meet up after the session to go to a nearby cafe
- Mel values activities that promote child development, interaction and learning (Starting Well)
- Mel has financial resources to access other children's activities, and is a serial user of other activities (e.g. swimming classes)
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast



Tech resistant

Unknown to specialist services



Known to specialist services

Nice to have



Essential

# Library User 4

## JACK

TYPICALLY A SINGLE, UNEMPLOYED  
MAN WHO REGULARLY USES THE  
LIBRARY BUILDING AS A SAFE SPACE  
TO PASS TIME.

### Jack



Typically a single man who regularly uses the library building as a safe space to pass time.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Shelter. Safety. Pass time.  
Free electricity.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. **Computers**
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning



#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged between 30-50. Typically male, living alone, unemployed and has a lot of time to pass
- Jack is likely to experience mental health issues or have learning disabilities
- The library is used as a shelter during the day, and users possibly charge up mobile devices while in the library
- Visiting the library is part of a weekly or daily routine, and Jack may pop in and out of the library multiple times throughout the day
- There is no clear purpose for visiting the library, and Jack is unlikely to engage with other library services such as books or events/activities
- Jack may also use the library computers to pass time
- Likely to know other users of the library space who are in a similar position to them
- *Jack is likely to be known by other specialist services, such as mental health services*

Digital enthusiast



Unknown to specialist services



Nice to have



# Library User 5

## JAKE

SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT WHO USES THE LIBRARY NEAR TO SCHOOL AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY.

### Jake



Secondary school student who uses the library near to school at the end of the day.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Pass time. It's free. Safety. Quiet space. Education/learning.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library
2. Online catalogue
3. **Wi-fi** ✓
4. **Computers** ✓
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 12+, males and females, lives at home with family and has a social support network
- Multi users of space - using Wi-Fi, passing time after school, space to meet friends and play games as well as using as a quiet space to study
- High usage of own tablets/laptops and smartphones within the library connected to Wi-Fi, but may use the library computers if required
- Jake is unlikely to interact with other library users, or with staff - likely to self-serve if accessing books
- Jake values the free physical space and that the library is a non-judgemental space to pass time
- Would either walk to the library from school then use public transport (bus) or get a lift from a parent to get home
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 6

## K FAMILY

BLACK & MINORITY ETHNIC (BME) FAMILY  
WITH YOUNG CHILDREN. REGULARLY  
VISIT THE LIBRARY AS A PLACE TO  
FURTHER CHILDRENS' LEARNING.

### Kalowowski Family



BME family with young children.  
Regularly visit the library as a  
place to further learning.

#### WHY WE USE THE LIBRARY:

*Education/learning. Books.  
It's free.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue ✓
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- BME family with multiple children (pre-school and school age children), parents aged in their 30s
- Has an extended network of family and friends in the community – families are likely to be bilingual, English Speakers of Other Languages
- Visit the library regularly as a planned weekly activity
- Uses the library as a place of furthering learning and education, keen to use the library service to educate children from a young age. If libraries weren't available, they would be reliant on schools for additional educational resources
- Library space not used for socialising - they come to the library together as a family in a non-judgemental space
- Unlikely to interact with other library users. Would interact with staff if they had a query
- Would use public transport (bus) or personal transport to visit the library
- *Unsure whether they are likely to be engaged with any specialist services*

Digital  
enthusiast



Tech  
resistant

Unknown to  
specialist services



Known to  
specialist services

Nice to have



Essential

# Library User 7

## LILY

PROFESSIONAL WORKER WHO POPS INTO THE LIBRARY INFREQUENTLY TO PASS TIME AND BROWSE BOOKS.

### Lily



Professional worker who pops into the library infrequently to pass time and browse books.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Pass time. Books.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 30+, professional worker, typically female
- Lily uses the library infrequently to pass time and browse books - she has a library card and may borrow books on an irregular basis if she sees something that takes her interest
- Use of own mobile devices - may access library Wi-Fi for short periods but be unlikely to use library computers
- Local home library is likely to be different to Lily's work library, and she uses the library during lunchtime or leisure time
- They are engaged users of the physical library space for short, irregular periods of time
- Lily does not come to the library for the social interaction with staff or others, and is likely to self-serve
- Users are at risk of receiving library fines after forgetting to return books - likely to be put off using the library service once fine is accrued
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast



Tech resistant

Unknown to specialist services



Known to specialist services

Nice to have



Essential

# Library User 8

## KATY

MUM WITH YOUNG CHILDREN WHO RELIES ON LIBRARY ACTIVITIES AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN THE LIBRARY SPACE.

### Katy



Mum with young children who relies on library activities and other support services within the library space.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Children's activities. Access to support. It's free. Safety.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities ✓
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Mum aged between 20-30 with young children. Katy is likely to be out of work and in receipt of benefits, potentially experiencing multiple issues within the family home
- Katy uses her local library as a way to access other services (e.g. drop-ins) and is likely to value co-location of services
- Attends Rhyme Time sessions with her children on a regular basis
- For Katy, the library is more than just books however she may access books for the children after Rhyme Time sessions
- The library offers a safe and non-judgemental space to spend time and access multiple services which are essential for the family to receive advice and support
- The library is easily accessible and Katy is likely to walk from home
- *Katy is likely to be engaged with other specialist services, e.g. around housing*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 9

## MATTHEW

YOUNGER LEARNER, USES LIBRARIES  
CLOSE TO HOME OR COLLEGE/  
UNIVERSITY WHEN HE NEEDS A  
QUIET SPACE TO STUDY.

### Matthew



Younger learner, uses libraries close to home or college/uni when he needs a quiet space to study.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Education/learning. Quiet space.  
Books.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue ✓
3. Wi-fi ✓
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Students typically aged between 18-25, males and females. Could be living at home with family or away at university
- Uses the library as and when needed as a quiet space to study for college or university - higher frequency use over weekends or half term
- Matthew is tech savvy and brings own devices (e.g. mobile, laptop, tablet) and syncs all devices to library Wi-Fi
- Does not tend to use other library services, but may borrow academic books from time to time when required for learning
- Matthew potentially has a noisy home environment (with siblings or housemates) which makes the library an attractive offer
- Does not typically interact with library staff or other users, and is very likely to self-serve
- Uses libraries close to home or college – tends to be main town libraries
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential

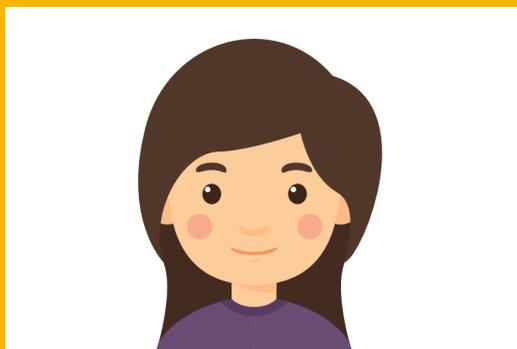


# Library User 10

## LUCY

LUCY HAS A LEARNING DISABILITY AND USES THE LIBRARY SPACE TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE INTO THE COMMUNITY, ALSO TO GIVE RESPITE TO HER CARER.

### Lucy



Lucy has a learning disability and uses the library space to get out of the house into the community, also to give respite to her carer.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Independence. Safety.  
Socialising.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers ✓
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged mid-30s, with a limited support network and has a primary carer who feels comfortable with Lucy going to the library alone as it is perceived a safe space
- Libraries are part of the weekly routine and Lucy often uses the space to meet key workers
- The library is also used as a social space, for example where there are cafes to meet other people
- Lucy is able to choose books and DVDs independently and is more likely to use the staff rather than self-serve
- Lucy will interact with staff members and other regular library users. Staff know Lucy on a first name basis and keep a watchful eye over her
- Lucy and her carer value the reliability and routine of the library services as it offers independence and autonomy for Lucy, while offering respite to her carer
- *Likely to be known to a range of services*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 11

## DAVID

DAVID IS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO HIS LOCAL LIBRARY TO USE COMPUTERS TO LOOK FOR WORK AND APPLY FOR JOBS.

### David



David is a frequent visitor to his local library to use computers to look for work and apply for jobs.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Access support. Job search.  
It's free.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. **Computers** ✓
5. Events/activities
6. **Printing/scanning** ✓

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 30-50, typically male, not currently working but seeking employment
- The library forms part of a weekly routine for David, he lives locally and walks to the library
- Uses library computers to look for work and apply for jobs, and relies on using library computers to log time spent as evidence of active job seeking for Job Centre Plus/Department for Work & Pensions
- David will use the library for printing and scanning facilities when needed and is fairly tech savvy, but not likely to have access to a computer at home due to unaffordable costs
- David knows the staff and may receive help on computers when required
- David may also attend Job Clubs at the library
- Users do not tend to borrow books from the library
- *Likely to be engaged with other specialist services (e.g. housing)*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 12

## DOUG

OLDER RETIRED PROFESSIONAL,  
A FREQUENT VISITOR TO HIS LOCAL  
LIBRARY TO READ BOOKS AND  
NEWSPAPERS.

### Doug



Older retired professional, a frequent visitor to his local library to read books and newspapers.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Newspapers. Books. Quiet space. Independence.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 65+, males and females, retired professionals - Doug has a social support network of family and friends
- Doug uses the library as part of a weekly routine to read the newspapers, and he gets to the library by walking or using his own transport
- High usage of newspapers compared to other user types. Doug may also borrow books infrequently or use the computers on occasion
- Does not have a preference for talking to staff/volunteers or self serving, and may do both
- Doug is unlikely to interact with other library users
- Values traditional 'quiet space' libraries and enjoys seeing younger generations using the space, but appreciates 'designated not segregated' spaces within the library (e.g. space for reading newspapers, and designated space for Rhyme Time sessions)
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 13

## HARRY

WORKING AGE MALE WHO IS HOMELESS, AND REGULARLY VISITS LIBRARY BUILDINGS MAINLY FOR SHELTER AND WARMTH.

### Harry



Working age male who is homeless, and regularly visits library buildings for shelter and warmth.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Safety. Shelter. It's free.  
Pass time.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 18+, typically male. No stable housing, so uses the library for shelter, safety, to keep warm, sleep, and pass time
- Harry would be unlikely to have a library card, and therefore not use library computers or other services. They may be digitally capable but lack access to technology
- They are quiet users not wanting to cause trouble or be seen and do not engage with other library services, only use the space within the library
- Harry is likely to bring his personal possessions into the library
- Visits the bigger libraries because they value the longer opening hours (particularly during the time when the homeless shelter is closed)
- Tends to use the libraries more during winter months
- Likely to network with other homeless people within the library
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 14

## GEETA

WORKING AGED ADULT, IS A BOOK LOVER AND A FREQUENT VISITOR TO LIBRARIES CLOSE TO HOME AND CLOSE TO WORK TO ACCESS BOOKS.

### Geeta



Working aged adult, as a book lover is a frequent visitor to libraries close to home and work to access books.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Books. Values library services.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue ✓
3. Wi-fi
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 35-50, typically female, may have teenage or adult children
- Geeta is a book lover and avid reader, and regularly visits the library close to home and work to renew, browse and return books
- May pop into the library during lunch hour in the working day
- Uses online catalogue to order books for collection
- May also use BorrowBox (e-book service) and likely to own their own e-reading devices. Tech savvy and has own computer (unlikely to use library computers)
- High consumption of own books
- Preference for using self-service machines within libraries, but also values well informed staff, e.g. with queries around book availability
- Users are 'Ambassadors' and 'Friends of Libraries' - they really value the service and are likely to promote libraries to others
- Users want to maintain the library ethos/culture and tend to seek out libraries wherever they are
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential

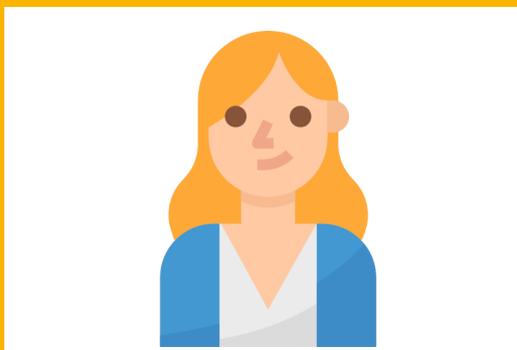


# Library User 15

## JANE

PROFESSIONAL WORKER USING LIBRARY SPACES TO MEET CLIENTS IN THE COMMUNITY, PROVIDING LEARNING, ADVICE OR SUPPORT.

### Jane



Professional worker using library spaces to meet clients in the community, providing learning, advice or support.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Meeting space. Convenience for clients. Safety. Quiet space.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library
2. Online catalogue
3. Wi-fi ✓
4. Computers
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Professional workers, males and females, who use library spaces as touchpoints to meet with clients and customers in the community
- Users could be tutors, mentors, support workers or outreach officers who meet with a range of clients, including children and young people and vulnerable groups who require support
- Jane values the neutral and safe space that libraries provide for her and her clients
- Jane may have a library card to make use of the Wi-Fi, and will bring her own personal or work devices (mobile/laptop) into the library
- Users may be unlikely to use other library services (e.g. books) for their own personal use during leisure time
- Users tend to use larger, main town libraries close to workbases, which also provide convenient locations for clients
- *They are not likely to be engaged with any specialist services at present*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 16

## SAMANTHA

YOUNG PERSON LOOKING AFTER  
YOUNGER SIBLINGS, TYPICALLY USING  
THE LIBRARY AFTER SCHOOL AND  
DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS.

### Samantha



Vulnerable young person looking after younger siblings within the library space, typically after school and during holidays.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

*Pass time. It's free.  
Safety. Shelter.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue ✓
3. Wi-fi ✓
4. Computers ✓
5. Events/activities
6. Printing/scanning

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 12+, typically an older sister looking after younger siblings, the library is used as a free and safe place to spend time
- Samantha brings her younger siblings to the library at the end of the school day and/or during school holidays where they may spend a great deal of time over consecutive days
- The library may be viewed by Samantha's family as a space where the children can be safe and 'watched over', in place of childcare. They are likely to be known to library staff, but may not interact with them unless there is a concern
- Samantha is likely to have a library card, and while in the library may read books with younger siblings, and access the computers and Wi-Fi
- Users will visit libraries close to school or home, and may either get picked up by a parent at the end of the day, or walk home
- Samantha and her siblings may be struggling with school and receive extra learning support in class
- *Samantha may be experiencing multiple issues within the family, and is likely to be engaged with other specialist services, e.g. Childrens and Social Care*

Digital enthusiast

Tech resistant



Unknown to specialist services

Known to specialist services



Nice to have

Essential



# Library User 17

## MADDIE

HOME EDUCATOR WHO RELIES HEAVILY ON LIBRARY RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT.

### Maddie



Home educator who relies heavily on library resources to support their child's learning and development.

#### WHY I USE THE LIBRARY:

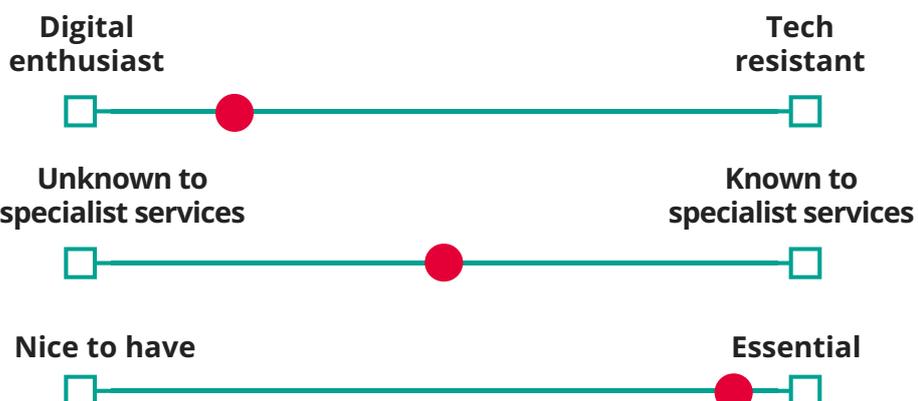
*Education/learning. Books. Quiet space. Socialising.*

#### KEY SERVICES USED:

1. Range of books in library ✓
2. Online catalogue ✓
3. Wi-fi ✓
4. Computers ✓
5. Events/activities ✓
6. Printing/scanning ✓

#### KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Aged 30-50, typically female, using the library regularly as a resource for home educating their child
- Maddie's child may have special educational needs which the family feel are better met through home education
- Maddie regularly uses libraries to seek information and books for her child's education and development. Library computers and Wi-Fi may also be used to support learning
- The library provides a quiet study space for Maddie and her child, and an alternative to the home environment, adding variety to the weekly routine
- The library also offers opportunities for Maddie's child to socialise with other children, and they are likely to take part in children's events and activities, particularly during school holidays (e.g. Summer Reading Challenge)
- Maddie is likely to have a strong support network, possibly using the library as a place to meet and share resources with other home educators
- Users may be likely to access multiple libraries, using sites close to home as well as larger main town libraries which may have more resources
- *Maddie and her child may be likely to be engaged with services around education*



# Non-user TREVOR

FULL-TIME EMPLOYED MALE, WORKING  
IN A SEMI-SKILLED/ UNSKILLED  
MANUAL PROFESSION WITH NO  
CHILDREN IN THE HOUSEHOLD.



## Typical characteristics of a non-user:

- Male
- Employed full-time (likely to be working in semi-skilled/unskilled manual professions)
- Single, no children in household
- Mosaic groups - Country Living (relatively affluent households in rural areas) and Rural Reality (rural households on more modest incomes)
- Likely to live in more rural areas
- Unlikely to buy or read books elsewhere
- Unlikely to have used library services as a child
- Unlikely to use library services in future

*(Based on national data)*

## References:

- Carnegie UK Trust (2016) Shining a Light
- MLA (2010) What do the public want from libraries?
- Department for Culture Media & Sport (2016) Taking Part focus on: libraries