






# Foreword


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Worcestershire County Council (WCC) is very proud of its library service and all that it does to deliver positive outcomes for the residents of Worcestershire.


Our libraries are thriving community spaces where people go to meet with one another and participate in a wide range of services from adult learning classes and job clubs to social connecting groups and health walks. For many they are a lifeline.



A Library  
Service for  
everyone




Resilient,  
Independent  
& Connected  
Communities



Prosperous  
Communities



Libraries  
First



Sustainable  
and

The new five year strategy for WCC libraries will:

Promote the library service and its benefits more widely across the county to reach more residents

Establish libraries as the front door for council and community services where appropriate

Establish libraries as community assets and increase community involvement through use of library space and volunteering opportunities

Tailor libraries' service offer to meet a wider range of council priorities and community needs, focusing on the most vulnerable and promoting independence

Seek to sustain our existing 21 public libraries, 2 library links and 1 mobile library, by:

- » extending self-service technology to allow customers to access library services independently at times that are convenient to them;
- » building on our successes at Broadway, Hagley and Upton to engage communities in sustaining and supporting libraries with lowest need; and
- » optimising library space by sharing it with other services to generate income

Enhance and provide new ways to access our digital library services

Right-size staffing resource to activity levels and need

Introduce an optimal library management structure that can deliver strategic ambitions for the service

Establish the Hive as a centre for service innovation and development for all county libraries

Invest in library resources to improve service quality and meet changing customer expectations

Manage libraries more efficiently through new approaches to funding

Explore opportunities for library service growth, in partnership with local communities, and in relation to significant housing developments in the county.











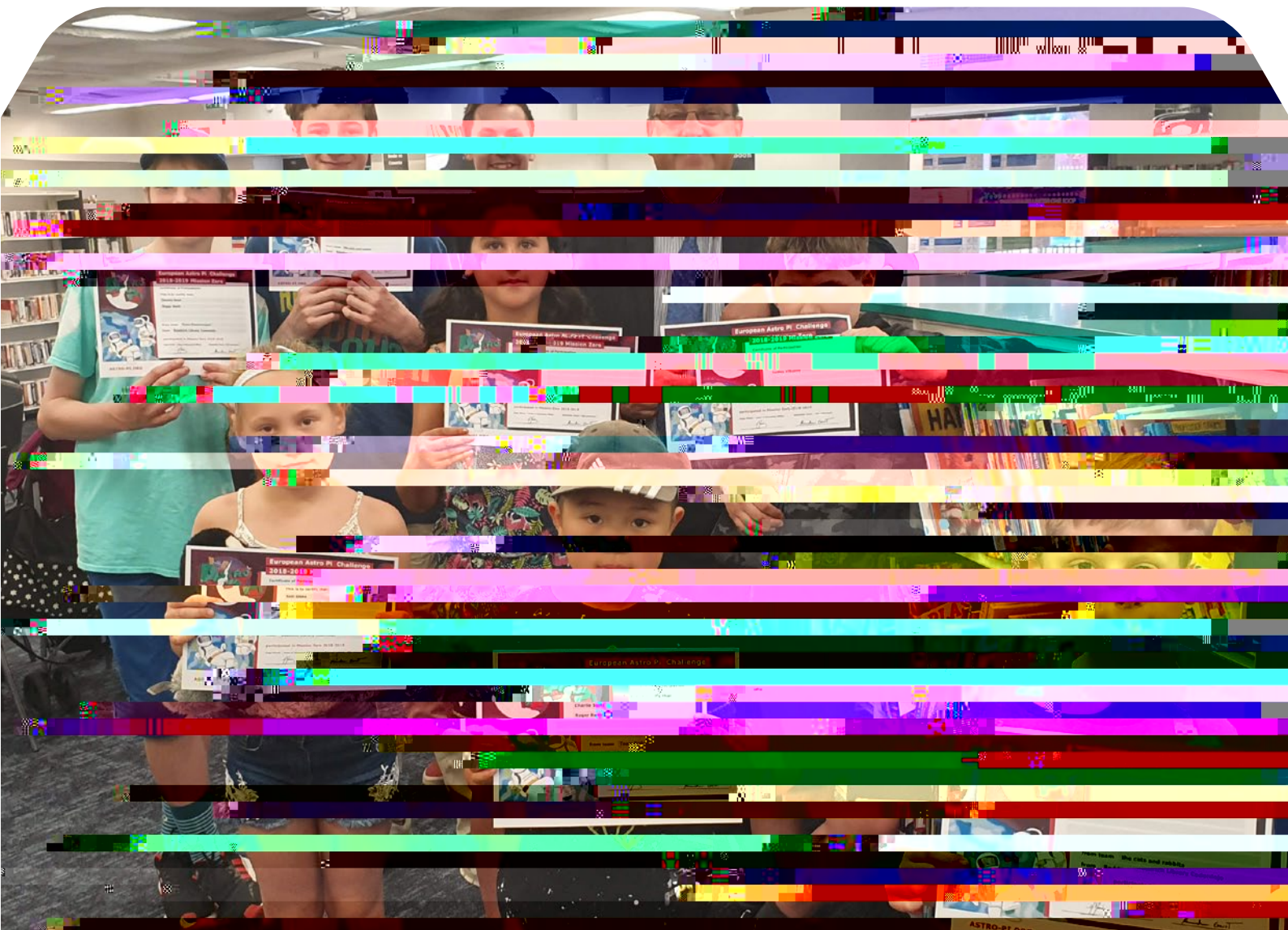
## Local Context

WCC Library Strategy is designed to support Worcestershire's changing communities.

Worcestershire has one of the fastest growing local economies and has a forecast for low positive growth in the short term. Being "Open for Business" remains a key priority for the Council and Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's (WLEP) 10 Year Strategy is to increase economic value in the county by around a third by 2025, creating 25,000 extra jobs and building 21,500 new homes.

Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) is working on Worcestershire's Local Industrial Strategy which will identify the county's local strengths and set out actions to improve productivity, including retraining an ageing workforce. A report by the Institute for Public Policy Research<sup>1</sup> highlights the importance of developing adult skills, in response to rapid advances in technology and an aging population.

The population of Worcestershire is projected to increase by 474,000 (around a third) by 2026.





## National Library Context

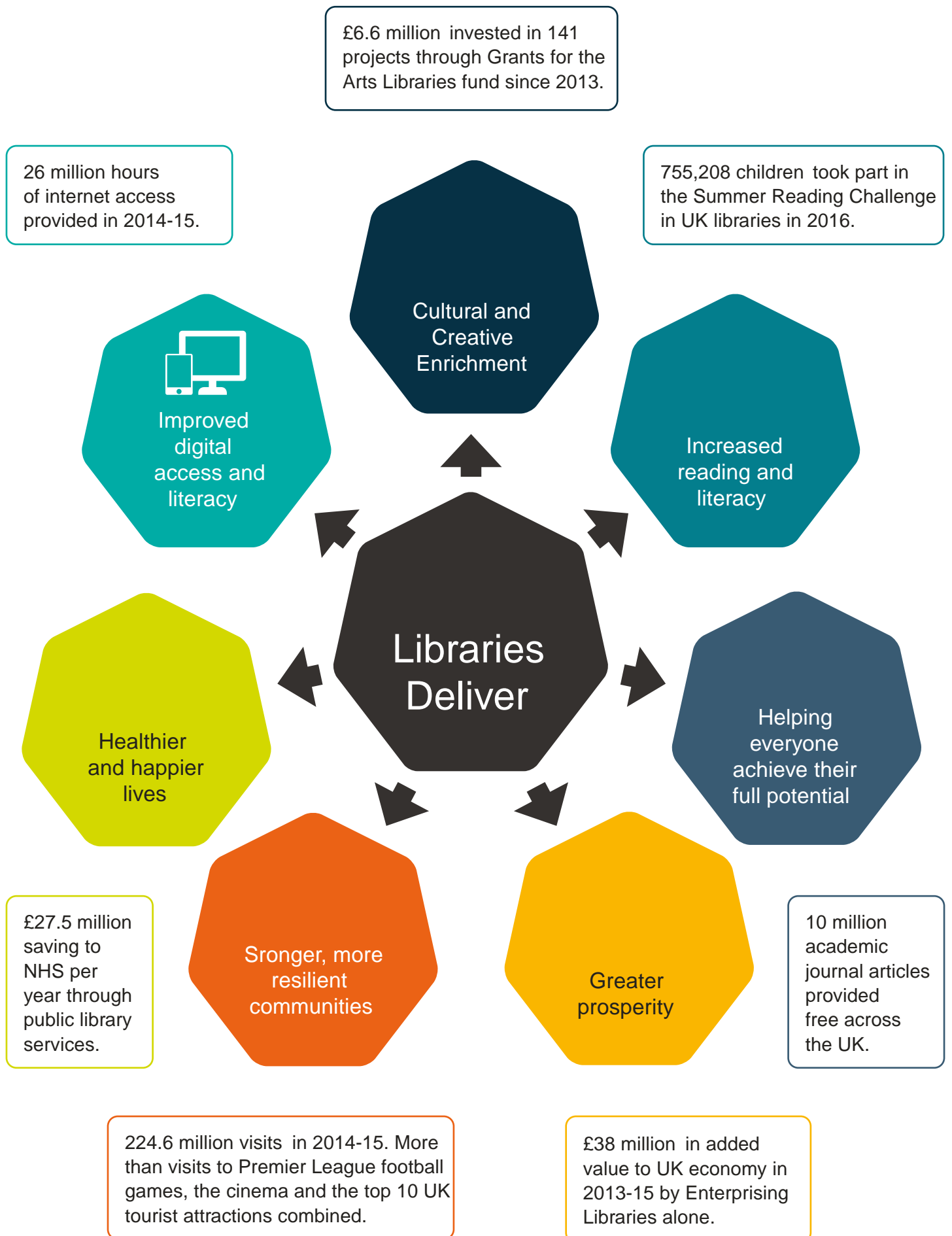
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Public libraries are a statutory service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Act requires library authorities to provide a “comprehensive and efficient service” for people who live, work or study within the authority area.

In 2016, the national Libraries Taskforce published ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021’ in which it sets out the strategic vision and commitment to public libraries in England, recognising the challenging times that councils are facing running library services, calling for radical thinking to protect frontline library services and acknowledging the need for councils to work in ‘new and different ways’ to ‘thrive and not just survive’.

The Libraries Taskforce recognises that local libraries provide a unique ‘cradle-to-grave service’, offering significant reach into local communities and a cost-effective way of ensuring that people are connected to local services. The report sets out an ambition for everyone to:

To achieve these ambitions the Libraries Taskforce identifies seven outcomes that library services should contribute to at a local level:





## Financial Challenges

Growing demand for adult and children social care services have resulted in budget pressures for Worcestershire County Council which are only partially offset by business rates and increases in Council Tax.

In response to these pressures, steps are being taken to transform the way the Council works and delivers services. To become fit for the future, the Organisational Redesign Programme commenced in 2019 to ensure that the Council and its workforce will be effective, efficient, and flexible to meet the changing needs of Worcestershire residents.

In 2018/19 the net budget for WCC libraries was £3,752,000, a figure that includes library-related costs of the Hive but excludes costs of other council services based at the Hive.

£300,000 of Libraries' overall base budget is funded by Public Health ring-fenced grant and £650,000 of premises-related income is generated each year through rental income from services co-located in library buildings and from library meeting room hire.

70% of the overall service budget is spent on staff, with the remaining 30% covering premises, hardcopy and electronic resources (books, newspapers, magazines, AV material, online reference sources), IT, service support and service development costs.

£196K permanent savings were realised in 2018/19 with £4K carried forward to 2019/20. The target for 2019/20 has been to save £395k (plus £4K carry forward) and is on track for delivery albeit only £310K are permanent savings with the remaining £89K being realised through one-off savings. This means the £89K will need to be carried over to next financial year. This leaves an additional £205K (total £294K) to be delivered in 2020/21 which will be identified through the development and implementation of the Library Strategy. This will be achieved through securing income from renting space in libraries, introducing new self-service technology in libraries, seeking further community support for libraries and right-sizing frontline staff and management resource in accordance with activity and need.

# Strategic Ambitions for Libraries

WCC Libraries have identified five strategic library ambitions which articulate our vision over the next five years:

**A Library Service for Everyone:** raise awareness of library services and their benefits to ensure wider community engagement

**Libraries First:** put libraries at the heart of delivering Council and community services

**Resilient, Independent and Connected Communities:** use libraries' trusted brand to deliver services that ensure residents are healthier, have a better quality of life and remain independent for as long as possible

**Prosperous Communities:** develop new services to support business enterprise, improve skill levels and help more people into work

**Sustainable and Innovative Libraries:** invest in new library service delivery models and secure new funding streams to future-proof libraries across Worcestershire



Our strategic ambitions consider the local, national and financial context described in this document. They have also been shaped by 5803 responses from Worcestershire residents to three library consultation and engagement surveys, which were carried out between Summer 2018 and Autumn 2019, and by feedback received at 23 public consultation meetings which were attended by a total of 800 residents.

Feedback from library staff and Council service leads has also shaped our strategic ambitions, alongside recommendations identified in Libraries' Needs Assessment and service improvements identified in a self-assessment review undertaken by the Library Service in October 2019.

Learning from the transformation experiences of other library authorities has also been considered.



## Ambition 1: A library service for everyone

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Raise awareness of library services and their benefits to ensure wider community engagement

WCC libraries occupy a unique position within local communities, offering a wide range of services that are available to all. Everyone in Worcestershire can borrow books and download e resources; access the internet and use computers free of charge; sign up to an adult learning course, attend a job club or job fair, receive one-to-one support getting online and using digital services, access specialist health resources, take part in one of many social connecting groups and sign-up to volunteer in a library.

We have received strong and clear feedback during public consultation and engagement that we need to do more to raise awareness of these services across the county, so that more residents understand our full library offer and choose to use our services now and in the future.

By raising awareness and expanding the range of library services on offer we will increase the number of local people who benefit from the skills, resources and opportunities available in libraries to improve their quality of life

## Ambition 2: Libraries First

### Put libraries at the heart of delivering Council and community services

The National Libraries Taskforce has identified an ambition for Council services and community partners to understand what libraries have to offer them and see them as their first choice to provide information, signposting and services within local communities.

WCC Libraries are well placed to reach Worcestershire residents and communities. We already deliver face-to-face Council Customer Services across 5 out of 6 Districts and co-design services with co-located partners to meet shared service priorities.

By demonstrating what libraries can offer to the Council and community partners, and with backing from political and senior leadership, we will increase opportunities for libraries to play a more central role delivering council services to communities across the county.

### How will we achieve this ambition?

We will develop a communication strategy to raise the profile of libraries within WCC and increase understanding of how libraries can help to deliver corporate priorities.

We will make the case for libraries to deliver council services to communities, drawing on national research and customer feedback data to evidence the social return on investment and outcomes that libraries deliver. We will also review WCC Libraries' outcomes framework and align it more closely with corporate outcomes.

With the backing of political and senior Council leaders, we will establish libraries as the 'front door' for Council services where appropriate, and by doing so develop libraries further as community hubs for local residents.

We will actively promote the development of digital skills to enable customers to access Council services independently and confidently. We will work with Council service leads to include libraries in their strategic plans where appropriate.

Through improved marketing and networking, we will promote the benefits of libraries to service commissioners and decision-makers in external community organisations with a view to identifying new opportunities for libraries to deliver services on behalf of community partners. We will also adopt a cost-based pricing structure for delivering services for partners. We will build closer relationships with community partners to better understand their strategic plans, identifying opportunities to co-design services which meet shared priorities and benefit residents.

## Case Study: Providing a front door for Council Services

Following a Council review of its face-to-face provision for residents applying for council customer services, including School Admissions, Blue Badges, and Concessionary Travel, a decision was taken to transfer responsibility for the delivery of these services, from third party providers to WCC Libraries.

As well as delivering these services at 50% lower cost to the Council, WCC Libraries have added value for service users through signposting to digital support services and promoting wider library-based social and learning activities. Of almost 2000 council service customers provided with support by library staff in 2018/19



## Ambition 3: Resilient, independent and connected communities

Use libraries' trusted brand to deliver services that ensure residents are healthier, have a better quality of life and remain independent for as long as possible

WCC Libraries have an important role to play in building stronger, more resilient and connected communities. We provide multiple activities and services that can address health needs, impact upon the wider determinants of health and contribute to tackling health inequalities in individuals, families and groups across all ages. As trusted, safe and welcoming community spaces, libraries offer a route for public services to reach communities, providing access to information and signposting, creating social spaces for people to come together and access services that encourage learning and aspiration, improve skills and confidence, promote wellbeing and independence and reduce loneliness and isolation.

Our health and wellbeing offer is aligned to and contributes to, a range of Public Health outcomes and Health and Well-being Board priorities, through a collaborative service level agreement. Our provision for children and families is aligned to the Council's Best Start in Life and Early Intervention focus in the Worcestershire Children and Young People's Plan, with a strong focus on supporting vulnerable and looked after children.

By aligning library services more closely to a wider range of Council priorities, with a focus on supporting adults to remain at home and live independently for as long as possible, we will help to build more resilient, independent and connected communities, whilst ensuring that the Council and residents get best value from their investment in libraries.



## How will we achieve this ambition?

We will support individuals to access information to support their needs, promote self-care opportunities and create safe and welcoming spaces for all.

We will help to tackle loneliness and social isolation by developing our social connecting and outreach offer, working with Council, NHS and community partners to introduce new services for older, socially isolated or disabled residents and adults of all ages who are experiencing loneliness.

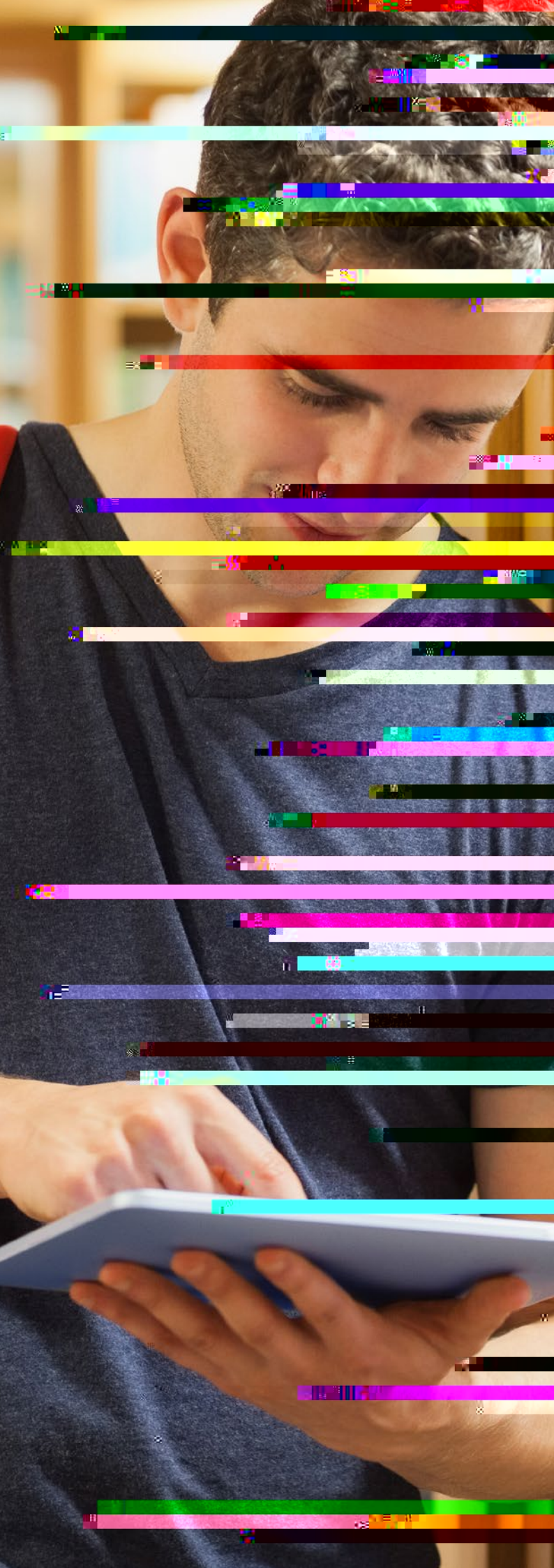
In line with the Council's key priority to promote independence and health and wellbeing, we will enhance Adult Services' demand management strategy by establishing libraries as a hub for enabling services to support people to live at home independently for as long as possible

We will help residents to make responsible choices for their future by promoting the importance of planning for long term care needs and raising awareness of how to prevent the need for long term care.

We will work with Adult Services and District Councils to identify and target those most at risk and provide proactive engagement and support at a community level.

We will continue to work with Adult Learning and community partners to develop services that promote good physical and mental health, particularly for an ageing population.

„ We will continue to work with the Early Help Partnership Board to support school readiness and with schools and the University of Worcester to develop a service offer that contributes to improving attainment across the curriculum and to developing teachers' skills through enhanced access to teaching support resources.



## Case Study: Library Connect Cafes

In 2018, working in collaboration with Public Health, WCC Libraries engaged with residents across the county to answer the question, 'How can libraries improve your health and wellbeing?'

Results from the engagement prompted the creation of Connect Cafes in libraries which build on existing social connecting services in libraries, helping to tackle social isolation by bringing more people together to share interests and experiences and providing an opportunity for them to connect and interact with other people in the community.

Working closely with partners, libraries have run 59 Connect Cafes between April and September 2019, connecting 515 residents in a range of themed events including Dementia and Reminiscence Cafes, Carers Cafes, Computer Skills Café's and Language Chats.

96% of Connect Café participants reported an increase in social interaction, 72% felt more connected to their local area and 85% reported an increase in their confidence.

## Ambition 4: Prosperous communities

Develop new services to support business enterprise, improve skill levels and help people into work

WCC libraries contribute to the Council's Open for Business priorities through reading and literacy support, a comprehensive library-based adult learning programme, services for job seekers and volunteering opportunities for all ages.

By developing new services aligned more closely to Council priorities we will ensure libraries play a bigger role building prosperity and raising aspiration in the county.

How will we achieve this ambition?

Working closely with the Council's Economic Development team, we will seek European Regional Development funding to develop a business enterprise support service in libraries across the county for business start-ups and early stage new businesses.

We will build on the Hive's membership of the British Libraries' Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) Network to establish libraries as a gateway to business information and signposting and to the Council's wider business support offer.

We will work with the local Growth Hub and Economic Development teams to provide a signposting service for companies looking to expand in the county and support local businesses to access business resources available within the library network.

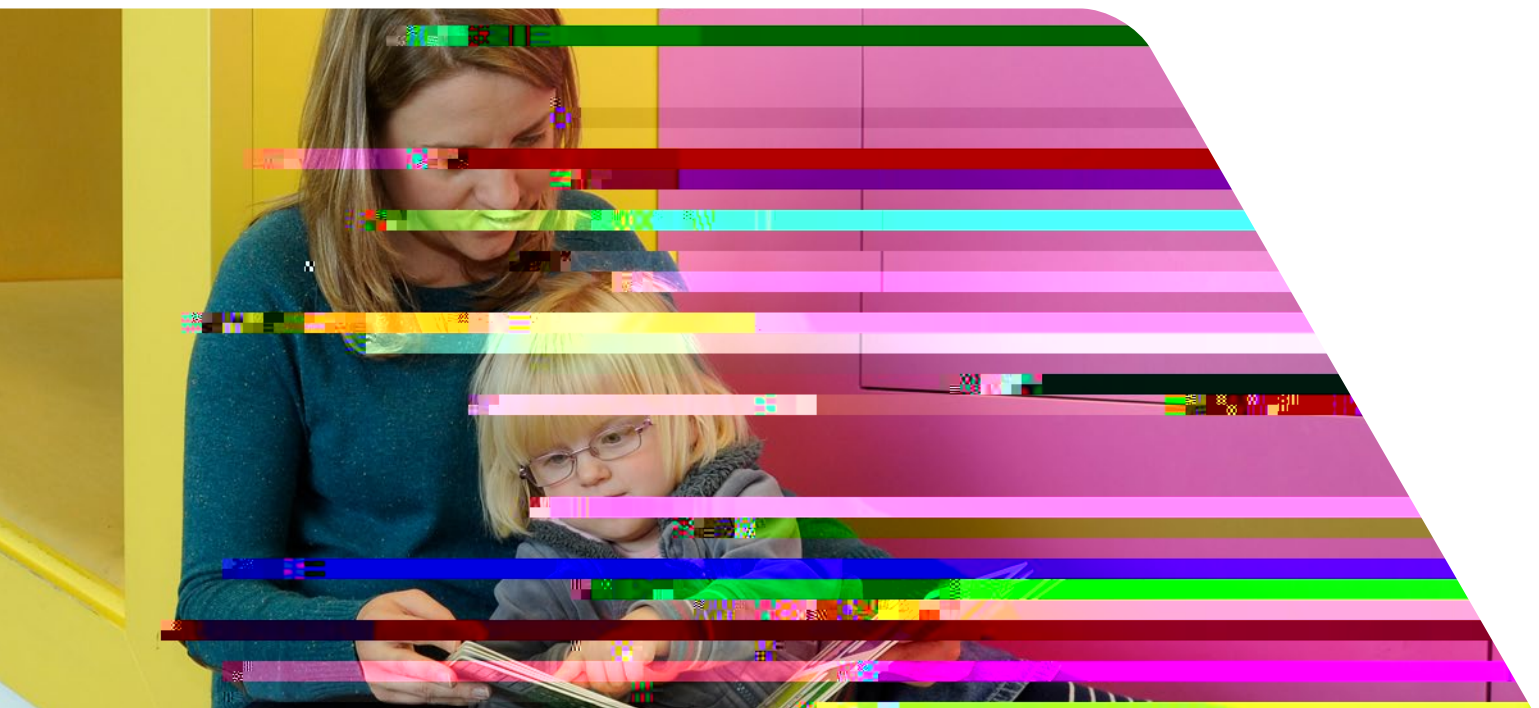
We will work closely with the Council's Learning and Skills service to introduce new services in libraries that meet requirements identified in Worcestershire's Local Industrial Strategy. By extending our adult learning and employment support services, developing our skills offer and working with local partners, including local councils, we will provide opportunities in libraries:

- » for the existing workforce, particularly those in the over 50s age group, to retrain or upskill to meet the developing needs of local businesses.
- » to address low levels of social mobility in parts of the County by ensuring residents have a skills pathway which will raise aspirations of the next generation of the local workforce.

We will introduce traineeships to improve employment chances of young people, particularly those who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) and 16-24 years old.

We will continue to encourage interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths in libraries and develop the Hive as a showcase for STEAM innovation.

We will work with partners to reach more job seekers and will strengthen our Job Club offer to improve the employment outcomes of participants.





## Ambition 5: Sustainable and innovative libraries

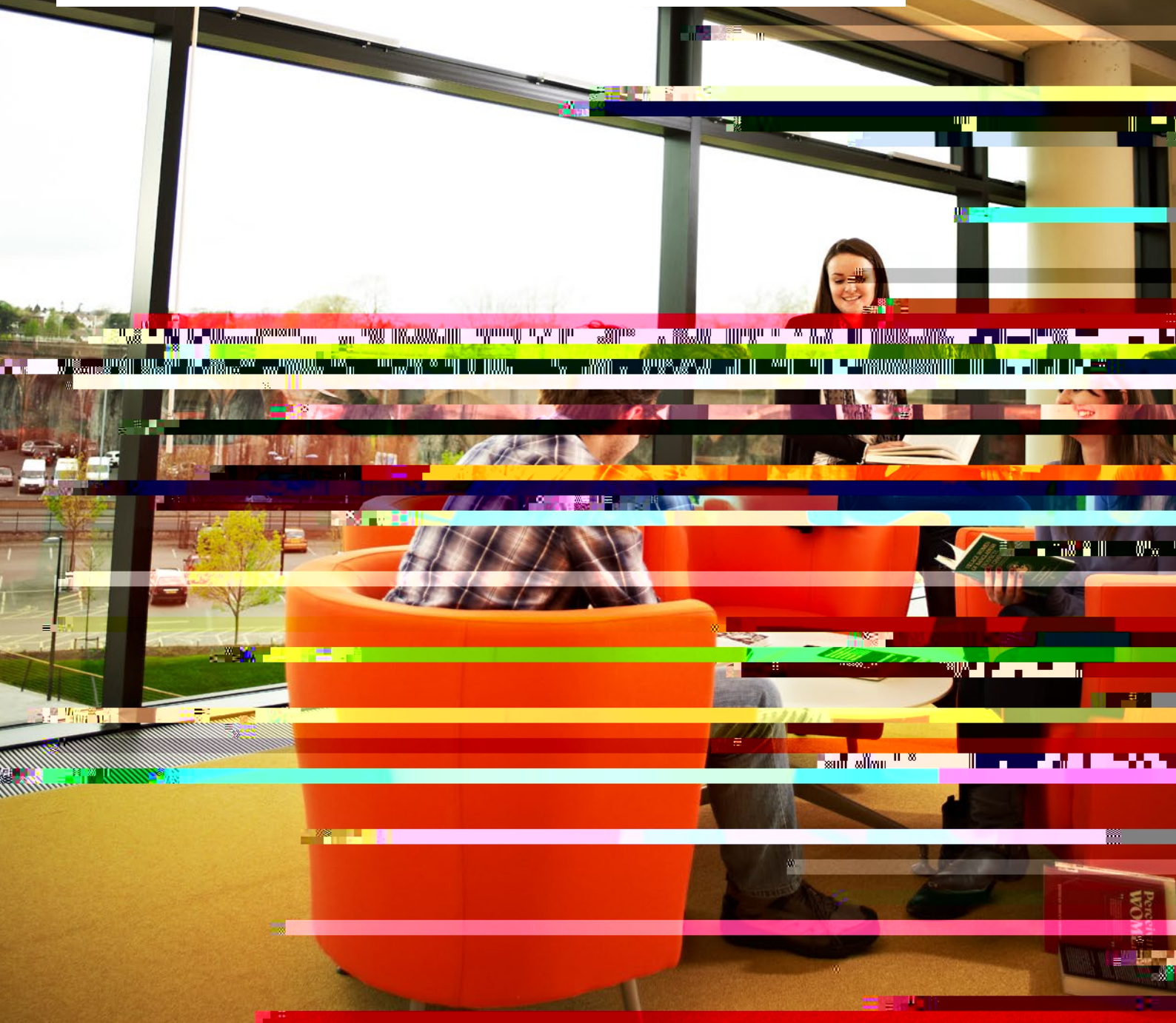
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Invest in new library service delivery models and secure new funding streams to future-proof libraries across Worcestershire

WCC has a commitment to securing the future of its library network for the benefit of Worcestershire residents. There is recognition, however, WCC libraries must find new ways of providing library services that deliver efficiencies for the Council while future-proofing services, meeting the needs of Worcestershire residents as well as our statutory duty to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service.

## Case Study: Study Happy at the Hive

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	Year One			Year Two	Year Three
	Jan 2020	Feb 2020	Mar 2020	Apr 20 - Mar 21	Apr 21 - Mar 22
Workforce	Design fit for future management and staffing structure			Implementation ★	
Communication	Libraries First - Development of a robust Communication and Engagement Strategy ★				
	Engaging Communities and Partners - Individual Library Activity to launch strategy and ensure fit for future solutions identified				
	Investment in branding and awareness raising inc. Website Redesign and enhancement of Digital Offer				★
	Procurement, Planning and launch of refreshed website				★ Launch of Open Library Spaces and Self Service Technology
				★ Comprehensive Service Development Plan for 2 Years	



