



Public Libraries Strategy

2025-2030



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"Books can be dangerous. The best ones should be labeled 'This could change your life.'"

— **Helen Exley**



Cabinet Member Forward



As we look ahead to the next five years, Monmouthshire's Public Library Service is committed to fostering a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking community. Our ambition is to create a space where everyone, regardless of age or background, can access the resources and support they need to thrive. We believe that libraries are more than just buildings filled with books; they are dynamic spaces within our Community Hubs that are places of learning, creativity, and community connection.

Our strategic goals reflect our dedication to promoting literacy, supporting wellbeing, and embracing digital innovation. By building strong partnerships with local schools, enhancing our Welsh language offerings, and addressing social isolation, we aim to make a lasting impact on the lives of our residents.

As we embark on this journey, we are inspired by the words of American author and librarian, Carla Hayden:

"Libraries are a cornerstone of democracy—where information is free and equally available to everyone. People tend to take that for granted, and they don't understand what's at stake."

Together, we will ensure that Monmouthshire's libraries continue to be places of opportunity, empowerment, and community for all.

County Councillor Angela Sandles
Cabinet Member for Equalities & Engagement



Introducing Monmouthshire County Council's Libraries Strategy for 2025 - 2030

Monmouthshire County Council is proud to present its Libraries Strategy 2025–2030 — a bold and forward-looking vision to reimagine library services as inclusive, vibrant community hubs.

Grounded in the ambitions of Monmouthshire's Community and Corporate Plan (2022-28), this strategy aims to deepen community engagement, promote lifelong learning, and advance digital and social inclusion. It reflects a strong commitment to national priorities and legislative frameworks, including the Welsh Language Act 1993, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, the Digital Strategy for Wales, and action plans supporting anti-racism, LGBTQ+ inclusion, age-friendly communities, and the reduction of loneliness and social isolation. Through this integrated approach, Monmouthshire's libraries will become dynamic, accessible spaces that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of all residents.

Our Vision

To create inclusive, innovative, and accessible library services that empower residents, enhance community wellbeing, and promote lifelong learning.

Our Commitment

Underpinned by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, our strategy commits to providing a "comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons." At the heart of our mission is the promotion of a 'Reading Journey' for every citizen of Monmouthshire.

We recognise that reading evolves throughout life, yet remains a transformative and essential activity. Literacy is not just a skill; it is a gateway to academic achievement and significantly influences outcomes such as earning potential, health, and wellbeing. High levels of literacy are crucial for happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Our Current Landscape

6 library hubs across the county:

- Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow, Gilwern, Monmouth & Usk
- 350,000+ annual visits (2024-25)
- 33,000+ library members
- 29,000+ active borrowers



SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Community trust
- Skilled staff
- Integrated Community Hubs

Weaknesses

- Limited digital infrastructure
- Inconsistent outreach

Opportunities

- Digital expansion
- School partnerships
- Inclusive programming
- Opportunities to expand partnerships and modernise services

Threats

- Budget constraints
- Changing user expectations

Our Strategy will be Grounded in Bold Aspirations and Ambition

Building a Literate and Confident Society

Libraries play a pivotal role in building a literate and confident society by developing, delivering, and promoting creative reading activities. Reading for pleasure is particularly important, as it contributes to healthier, happier, and more confident individuals. Our libraries support this by running reading programmes, hosting book clubs, and providing advice and guidance to help people expand and develop their reading choices.

Key Initiatives

Our strategy includes initiatives like Bookstart, a partnership with Booktrust and Health Visitors, ensuring every baby and toddler in Monmouthshire receives two free packs with a book and information about sharing books with their child. The Summer Reading Challenge is another cornerstone, significantly improving reading confidence and independence, ensuring pupils are ready for their return to school, and preventing the summer reading literacy 'dip.'

Cultural and Creative Enrichment

Libraries are also vital for cultural and creative enrichment. They often provide babies with their first cultural experiences through Baby Rhyme Times and enable local communities to enjoy free cultural experiences, such as author visits, reading groups, and performances.



Strengthening Partnerships

Building partnerships with local schools, aiming to increase collaboration from 50% to 90%. With the curriculum's emphasis on reading for pleasure, these partnerships will further support our goals.

A Vibrant Future

By addressing these priorities, Monmouthshire's libraries will become vibrant, inclusive spaces that meet the evolving needs of all residents, fostering a literate, confident, and culturally enriched society. Join us on this exciting journey as we transform our libraries into hubs of learning, creativity, and community engagement.

Strategic Objectives

1. Grow & Diversify Library Membership



Ambitions:

Increase library membership by 25% for juniors and 20% for adults by 2030.

Actions:



Launch targeted membership campaigns focusing on families, young adults, older people, and underrepresented groups.

Reduce barriers to membership by simplifying the joining process and promoting libraries through community and online networks.



Offer incentives, such as book rewards (build on the Summer Reading Challenge Model) and events, to encourage new members.



2. Strengthen Learning and Digital Skills



Ambitions:

Expand and modernise the digital services to meet the needs of all residents.

Actions:



Host 25 workshops on digital skills, cybersecurity, AI, and online services to support the Digital Strategy for Wales in collaboration with Monmouthshire Community Education and Third Sector partners and stakeholders by 2026-27

Prioritise accessibility and inclusivity in all digital services, ensuring older adults and those with additional needs are supported.



3. Promote Inclusion and Community Wellbeing



Ambitions:

Address loneliness and isolation while fostering intergenerational connections and sustainable practices via outreach in 10 Communities by 2027.

Actions:



Offer safe, welcoming spaces for community activities and social connection.

Deliver intergenerational programmes, such as storytelling and digital skills mentoring.



Comprehensive refresh of our Reading for Wellbeing Collection.

Promote green initiatives, such as eco-themed reading groups and lending schemes for sustainable living resources.



Host events and activities that celebrate cultural diversity and LGBTQ+ pride.



4. Strengthen the Welsh Language and Cultural Identity



Ambitions:

Ensure Monmouthshire Libraries actively promote and support the Welsh language, in alignment with the Welsh Language Act 1993.

Actions:



Expand Welsh-language collections, including books, audiobooks, and digital resources for all ages.

Develop bilingual services across all library locations, ensuring Welsh-speaking staff or resources are readily available.



Host Welsh-language reading groups, storytelling sessions, and cultural events celebrating Welsh heritage.

Work with schools and community partners to promote Welsh-language literacy and engagement.



5. Enhance Digital Access and Innovation



Ambitions:

Expand and modernise the digital services to meet the needs of all residents by launching 3 new digital services by 2030.

Actions:



Launch Spydus Customer Application offering access to catalogues, e-resources, and event bookings.

Broaden the availability of e-books, audiobooks, and online learning resources, via device lending offer.



Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to deliver initiatives tackling loneliness and improving mental wellbeing.



This strategy will align with key existing Strategic Frameworks

1. Our Libraries Strategy will align with the key themes and objectives of Monmouthshire County Council Community and Corporate Plan:

- A Fair place to live where the effects of inequality and poverty have been reduced.
- A Green place to live and work, with reduced carbon emissions, and making a positive contribution to addressing the climate and nature emergency.
- A Thriving and ambitious place, where there are vibrant town centres, where businesses can grow and develop.
- A Safe place to live where people have a home and community where they feel secure.
- A Connected place where people feel part of a community and are valued.
- A Learning place where everybody has the opportunity to reach their potential.

2. Welsh Government Strategies:

- **Future Generations Act 2015:** Libraries will support all seven wellbeing goals, prioritising cultural vitality, equality, and community cohesion.
- **Digital Strategy for Wales:** Services will enhance digital inclusion, ensuring no one is left behind in the digital age.
- **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan:** Libraries will foster inclusive spaces that challenge discrimination and celebrate diversity.
- **LGBTQ+ Action Plan:** Programmes and resources will reflect the experiences and contributions of LGBTQ+ communities.

- **Age Friendly Wales:** Libraries will support healthy ageing by promoting lifelong learning, social connection, and access to information.
- **Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy:** Libraries will act as key community hubs to combat isolation and foster social inclusion.



Key Deliverables

- Achieve a 25% increase in junior membership and a 20% increase in adult membership by 2030.
- Launch three new digital services, including the Spydus Library App (2025) and expanded e-resources by 2030.
- Establish sustained partnerships with 70% of schools in Monmouthshire by 2030.
- Deliver 25 joint workshops annually with community education partners by academic year 2026-27.
- Host quarterly events celebrating diversity and inclusion, aligned with national action plans to be implemented by 2026
- Implement outreach programmes to address loneliness and isolation in at least 10 community locations by 2027.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Progress will be assessed through:

- Quarterly progress reports aligned with strategic objectives within our internal service delivery plans.
- Annual impact assessments measuring alignment with Welsh Government goals and Monmouthshire's corporate priorities.
- Surveys and feedback from users, schools, and community partners, developed and shaped by the requirements of the Welsh Public Library Standards reporting framework.
- Welsh Public Library Standards Compliance.

Conclusion

This strategy reaffirms Monmouthshire's commitment to delivering inclusive, innovative, and impactful library services. By aligning with national and local priorities, we aim to empower individuals, strengthen communities, and create a resilient, equitable future for all.



Appendix

Welsh Public Library Standards:

<https://www.gov.wales/measuring-public-library-service-our-standards>

Monmouthshire County Council Community and Corporate Plan 2022-2028:

https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/app/uploads/2023/07/MMCCCommCorpPlan_Final_EN.pdf

Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015:

<https://futuregenerations.wales/discover/about-future-generations-commissioner/future-generations-act-2015/>

Digital Strategy for Wales:

<https://www.gov.wales/digital-strategy-overview>

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan:

<https://www.gov.wales/anti-racist-wales-action-plan-2024-update-html>

LGBTQ+ Action Plan For Wales:

<https://www.gov.wales/lgbtq-action-plan-wales>

Age Friendly Wales:

<https://www.gov.wales/age-friendly-wales-our-strategy-ageing-society>

Loneliness and Social Isolation Strategy:

<https://www.gov.wales/loneliness-and-social-isolation-connected-communities>