

West Dunbartonshire Libraries Strategy 2026-2030

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Welcome



I am pleased to introduce the West Dunbartonshire Libraries Strategy 2026–2030, which sets out a shared vision shaped by our communities, our staff, and our partners. This strategy captures both where our library service stands today and where we aim to be in the years ahead: a modern, inclusive, and resilient service that offers opportunity, support, and connection for everyone who lives here.

Libraries have evolved significantly, yet the need for safe, welcoming public spaces has never been stronger. As our communities continue to navigate the challenges of the rising cost of living, libraries remain one of the few services that are freely accessible to all, making them more vital than ever.

The voices of our residents have been central to the development of this strategy. Through surveys, conversations in branches, and engagement in our schools, you told us that reading matters, spaces matter, trusted support matters, and connection matters. This plan responds directly to those priorities.

We recognise the financial pressures facing all public services, but we remain firmly committed to delivering a library service that is free to use, responsive to local needs, and rooted in creativity, partnership, and evidence. By seeking external funding, embracing innovation, and working collaboratively across the Council and with partner organisations, we will ensure that libraries continue to enrich and empower our communities.

Councillor William Rooney
Convener of Corporate Services

West Dunbartonshire Council Libraries Strategic Plan 2026-2030

The West Dunbartonshire Libraries Strategic Plan 2026–2030 was shaped by listening to our community.

This strategy sets out our shared vision for the next four years, focuses on the priorities that matter most to local people and explains how we'll track progress and make sure our services continue to meet community needs

Our Mission:

To provide the people of West Dunbartonshire with the highest quality library service that supports reading, lifelong learning, cultural engagement, and community wellbeing—ensuring inclusive digital access and welcoming spaces for all.

Background:

West Dunbartonshire's library service plays a vital role in strengthening local communities and helping people thrive. It supports the Council's commitment of building resilient neighbourhoods and unlocking the potential of every resident. Libraries remain a core public service, with a statutory duty to be accessible and adequate for all.

As defined by the Scottish Library and Information Council an adequate service is delivered through a planned strategic network of public libraries delivering core functions including:

- Providing universal access to hardcopy and electronic resources which are free, consistent and customer focussed
- Enabling access to resources for reading, information and learning
- Creating social capital by encouraging community involvement and community-based activity
- Helping to minimise social and digital exclusion
- Supporting learning and information needs in the information society and knowledge economy
- Promoting access to Scotland's cultural heritage and promoting cultural and creative activities
- Encouraging the public to pursue individual interests
- Promoting social justice, civic engagement and democracy
- Working in partnership with other agencies and organisations to offer value-added services
- Supporting economic development, co-creation, and sustainability

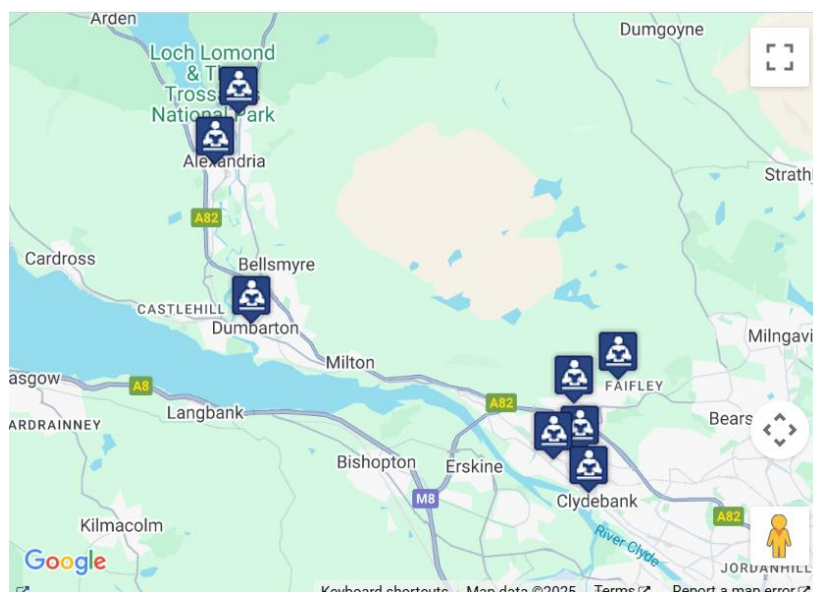
Research has shown that for every £1 invested into libraries, local economies stand to gain £6.95 of benefit ¹

West Dunbartonshire's 8 public libraries include 3 flagship branches in Alexandria, Dumbarton, and Clydebank with extended hours, including evenings and Saturday mornings. Balloch and Dalmuir offer mid-level access with some evening or weekend

¹ British Library, (2019) Democratising Entrepreneurship: Libraries as Engines of Economic Growth: A three year economic impact analysis. 2016-18

hours, while satellite branches in Faifley, Duntocher, and Parkhall operate limited weekday hours only. Our Mobile Library delivers to the Community every two weeks and calls in at more than 50 locations, the service also visits schools and early years centres. The home delivery service is free to all residents in West Dunbartonshire who are unable to visit one of our public libraries or the Mobile library.

School Library provision is offered 3 days per week in each secondary school within West Dunbartonshire.



West Dunbartonshire Libraries are spread across a diverse region in central Scotland, serving communities both along the River Clyde and in more rural areas. The geographical layout includes a mix of urban and suburban locations providing services to towns and villages with the council area.

Overall, West Dunbartonshire Libraries are well distributed across the area, ensuring access for citizens of both densely populated urban zones and more rural communities. The network supports community driven needs and a connection to local heritage. The mobile library further supports the rural community and those who are not in walking distance of their local library in particular primary schools and early years centres.

The number of libraries in West Dunbartonshire per 20,000 population is 1.78, the national average is 1.80 per 20,000 ²

The library service commits to reducing barriers of engagement for all age groups by ensuring all events and activities remain free with no fines or charges relating to book borrowing. The library service understands the need for a safe warm space for citizens to spend time with staff available to signpost to essential services when required.

² SLIC, Library Data 2024/25

In year 2024-25 Balloch Library, Parkhall Library and Dalmuir Library collocated into other council buildings delivering previously agreed budget savings. Faifley Library collocated into a new campus in October 2025.

In year 2025-26 two further moves are due to take place. Dumbarton Library will relocate to Glencairn Library and Museum with a stand-alone Children's Library. Library Headquarters services will relocate from Poplar Road into the former Dumbarton Library building which will become the base of the mobile and home delivery service.

Libraries and Child Poverty

As shown in the West Dunbartonshire Child Poverty Action Report 2024-25 there are 121 Data zones in West Dunbartonshire:

- All multi-member wards in West Dunbartonshire have areas with comparatively high incidences of multiple deprivation.
- Approximately 35,000 (37%) of the resident population have first-hand experience of multiple deprivation ³

Libraries are uniquely positioned to offer a safe, warm space for all visitors whether in school, public or mobile library service. The library service continues to provide free services and activities to children and families demonstrating our ongoing commitment to playing our part in alleviating the Cost-of-Living Crisis within our community.

Children with Additional Support Needs are recognised as a priority group within the Child Poverty report. We strive to deliver an inclusive service for anyone with an additional support need, recently bringing in sensory boxes with items including noise cancelling headphones and sensory toys to Alexandria, Clydebank and Dumbarton Libraries. We will evaluate their use over the course of the strategy and develop further resources where a need is identified. We will strengthen commitments to providing a range of accessible formats including Bookbug picture communication support, dyslexia-friendly materials, Easy Read and sensory-adjusted programming.

We will review our service provision using the Scottish Government Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Toolkit.⁴

Our Performance

The Library Service is guided by West Dunbartonshire Council's strategic vision and overseen by the Citizen, Culture and Facilities Strategic Area. It also follows national standards regarding ethics and censorship from the Scottish Library and Information Council and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals.

³ [West Dunbartonshire Local Child Poverty Action Report 2024/2025](#)

⁴ [Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Toolkit | Scottish Government](#)

Annual plans align with key national frameworks, including How Good is Our Public Library Service, Forward: The national strategy for public libraries in Scotland, Every Child a Library Member and Vibrant Libraries Thriving Schools national strategy for school libraries. We will demonstrate our commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and 11 outcomes of the National Performance Framework for Scotland through supporting the national library strategy refresh Fast Forward ⁵

Throughout this strategy period, we will commit to undertaking self-evaluation and peer review for each of the Quality Indicators in the How Good is our Public Library Service Framework.

- **Quality Indicator 1: Supporting Reading**
- **Quality Indicator 2: Supporting Learning**
- **Quality Indicator 3: Engaging Communities**

We monitor our performance through analysing visitor numbers, borrowing trends, and digital engagement with our online services such as BorrowBox and PressReader. We will continue to contribute to the Scottish Library and Information Council Public Library Data Framework with clear KPI's defined for each Strategic Aim.

Funding Context

Libraries remain a core public service, with a statutory duty to be accessible and adequate for all.

Demand for Council services continues to grow each year, alongside rising costs of delivery. However, available funding has not kept pace with this increase.

Over the next three years, the Council faces a projected funding shortfall of £42 million. To help bridge this gap, savings of £8.7 million will be required in 2026/27, with further efficiencies needed in subsequent years.

In response, the Council must carefully consider how to meet the evolving needs of our communities while operating within significantly reduced resources.

The most recent budget consultation showed what citizens think is most important regarding their Library service;

1. Investment in community events (i.e. bookbug, wellbeing sessions, art and heritage classes, exhibitions)
2. Investment in digital services and equipment (online reading materials, heritage collections including family history and computers/devices)
3. Investment in physical amenities (i.e. reading materials)
4. Maintaining operating hours/access at current levels
5. Investment to maintain buildings even if this means there are less of them

Library Service Budget decisions are driven by data, community feedback, and evaluation of performance indicators, resources and events to ensure best value.

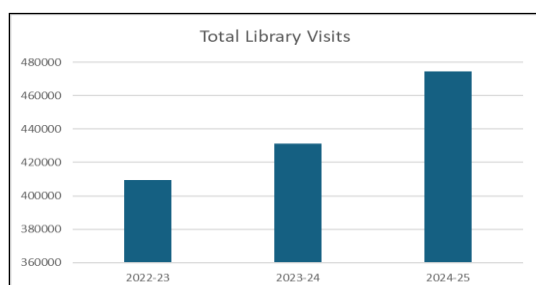
⁵ [Fast Forward: Public Library Strategy Refresh 2026](#)

West Dunbartonshire Libraries is committed to securing external funding to expand and enrich its services. Annual funding opportunities from the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) support the development of innovative public and school library programmes, with a focus on delivering new projects that meet community needs.

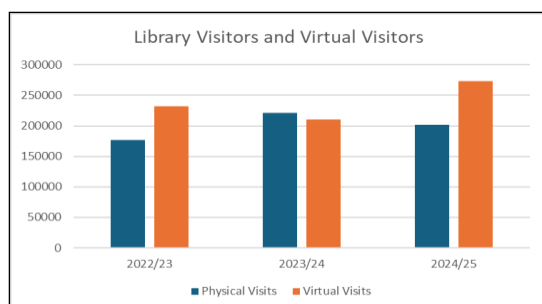
Recent successes include:

- **2025–26:** Funding secured for a **VE/VJ Day 80th Anniversary Programme**, offering commemorative events and educational activities.
- **2025–26:** SLIC funding awarded to establish a **Near Me Hub**, enabling virtual appointments and improving local access to services.
- **2024–25:** SLIC's Public Library Improvement Fund supported the **Libraries Empower Connections** project, promoting digital inclusion across the region.
- **2024–25:** Green Libraries Funding from CILIP backed the **Threads of Change** initiative, addressing fast fashion through community sewing workshops.

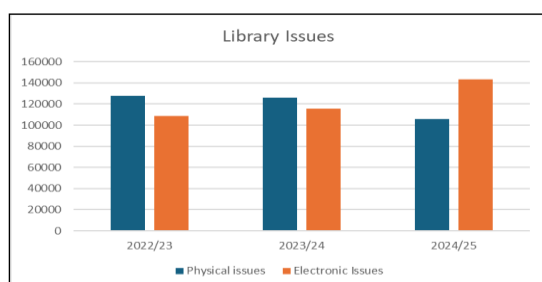
These projects reflect the library service's proactive approach to funding and its dedication to responding to evolving community priorities.



Library visitor numbers have shown recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic. The increase seen here between 2023-24 and 2024-25 is specifically due to sharp increase in online visits defined by the use of online library services.



Library visitor numbers are recorded for both physical visits and virtual visits. A drop in physical visits could be accounted for due to temporary closures when library moves have taken place in 2024-25 (Dalmuir, Balloch, Parkhall)



Library physical book issues have dropped slightly and we are seeing an increase in online issues – this includes articles from PressReader, eBooks and eAudio Books from BorrowBox and reading of Comics on the Comics Plus service.

Community Consultation Outcomes

West Dunbartonshire Council ran a public consultation from 17 March to 27 April 2025, inviting feedback on library service priorities through an online survey and paper copies available in all libraries.

The consultation received 348 responses, with 92% from existing library members. An overwhelming 98% see libraries as vital to their community's future. Most respondents found the layout of their library easy to navigate (93%) and felt libraries are accessible to all, including those with disabilities (89%). Additionally, 88% believe libraries support literacy for themselves and their families. 62% of people prefer visiting the library in person to access books and resources.

Our citizen's top 5 priorities when visiting the library:

1. Discovering great new books
2. Enjoying a calm, welcoming space
3. Having lots of resources all in one place
4. Getting helpful advice from our friendly staff
5. Joining in on a wide range of activities and classes

Our Strategic Aims:

These priorities have helped shape the future of our library service. They've guided our strategy and inspired four strategic aims that reflect what matters to our communities:

- **Strategic Aim 1: Reading and Learning**
- **Strategic Aim 2: Fostering Community Wellbeing**
- **Strategic Aim 3: Empowering Connections**
- **Strategic Aim 4: Sustainable Development and Innovation**

Our four strategic aims are supported by a commitment to service excellence and a skilled, adaptable library workforce focused on community needs.

These aims directly support the four key priorities set out in the Council's [Strategic Plan](#).

Library Strategic Aim	Council Strategic Priority
Reading and Learning	Our Community – Resilient and Thriving
Fostering Community Wellbeing	Our Community – Inclusive and Adaptable
Empowering Connections	Our Economy – Strong and Flourishing
Sustainable Development & Innovation	Our Environment – A Greener Future

How We'll Track Our Progress

We will track and monitor our progress against each Strategic Aim through annual service plans, mapping to national strategies and standards and the How Good is Our Public Library Framework.

We will evaluate how library service provision links into the work of other council areas including Equalities Mainstreaming and Outcomes Plan 2025-29 and Community Learning and Development Plan 2022-27.

We will continue to collaborate closely with our Community Planning partners, ensuring that our work is guided by a strong commitment to equality and human rights. By bringing this perspective to shared priorities—such as reducing child poverty and addressing wider inequalities—we aim to strengthen collective impact and deliver meaningful change for our communities.

Strategic Aim 1: Reading and Learning

Libraries inspire a lifelong love of reading and support literacy at every stage of life—from early years and family learning to school readiness and academic achievement.

Reading is the single strongest factor in determining a child's future life chances – more than their socioeconomic background or parents' level of education⁶. This underscores the vital role libraries play in nurturing independent reading habits that contribute to educational attainment, personal development, and lifelong learning.

“Reading just six minutes a day can reduce stress levels by 60% by reducing heart rate, easing muscle tension and altering state of mind. Reading is more effective at reducing stress than music, drinking a cup of tea, going for a walk or playing video games”⁷

We'll support lifelong learning and a love of reading by:

- Offering diverse, high-quality books and digital resources
- Welcoming community input on book collections
- Hosting reading groups and author events for all ages
- Supporting access through mobile and home delivery services
- Providing self-help materials for mental and physical wellbeing
- Reviewing our stock policy
- Working with reading committees / reading ambassadors for schools working towards Reading Schools accreditation
- Participation in the Every Child a Library Member project

⁶ OECD (2021), *21st-Century Readers: Developing Literacy Skills in a Digital World*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a83d84cb-en>.

⁷ (Lewis, University of Sussex, 2009).

Strategic Aim 2: Fostering Community Wellbeing

Libraries have always provided warm, welcoming spaces for everyone in our community. In 2019, 29% of households in West Dunbartonshire were identified as living in fuel poverty—highlighting the vital role libraries play in offering safe, warm environments and accessible services for those most affected.

We'll create inclusive, welcoming spaces by:

- Ensuring accessibility and contribution towards West Dunbartonshire Equality Outcomes
- Providing space and time to relax with a hot drink
- Offering sensory materials such as noise cancelling headphones to support your visit
- Providing free Wi-Fi, PC access, and low-cost printing including wireless printing
- Working with partners to share important health and wellbeing messages
- Supporting all age groups through tailored services, activities and training
- Bringing the library to you through the home delivery or mobile library service
- Tackling social isolation by providing a range of activities and events to help citizens meet others, develop new skills and find community information

Research has shown that library engagement saves NHS Scotland £3.2 million every year. This reinforces the broad support that libraries provide, making Scotland a fairer place for all ⁸

We will continue to develop our close partnership with HSCP teams ensuring that Libraries deliver on the Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing by offering trusted health information and support for health literacy, delivering Near Me appointments and digital support for Realistic Medicine with the roll out of NHS apps.

Strategic Aim 3: Empowering Connections

Libraries are essential digital public services committed to digital inclusion and building digital confidence through our commitment to the National Digital Strategy for Scotland ⁹

Each branch hosts a programme of activities and events, and our knowledgeable staff are on hand to support digital skills, share information, and connect people with helpful services and partners. Especially during times of financial hardship, these free services can offer meaningful support and make a real difference.

We'll strengthen community ties through:

- Free events and activities for all ages
- Fair access across all branches
- Collaborations with Arts, Heritage and culture partners
- Staff development and innovation with an annual training development plan in place
- Ongoing feedback and service improvement

⁸ SLIC (2019) Health on the Shelf, <https://scottishlibraries.org/health-on-the-shelf>

⁹ [Digital Strategy for Scotland Our Vision](#).

- Communicating regularly with library members and non-members through a variety of means

Strategic Aim 4: Sustainable Development and Innovation

Scottish libraries, as pioneers of resource sharing and responsible consumption, are actively embracing their role in promoting sustainable living. This commitment is reflected in evolving internal policies and the broadening of borrowing schemes that empower communities to share resources more responsibly. As trusted sources of information, public libraries play a key role in equipping individuals with the knowledge and tools needed to make informed, environmentally conscious choices in their daily lives.

We'll promote sustainability and innovation by:

- Acting on ideas from our staff-led Green Team, monitoring progress against the service Climate Action Plan
- Expanding garden-based programmes
- Encouraging eco-friendly crafting and circular economy projects
- Embedding initiatives like Green Library funded project Threads of Change
- Seeking external funding for new services
- Celebrating Green Libraries Week and supporting Carbon Literacy and other relevant training for staff

Conclusion:

This strategy outlines West Dunbartonshire Library Service priorities for the next four years, reaffirming our commitment to delivering core services while setting out ambitions for future development.

Implementation of this strategy will be reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis.

Equality Impact Assessment:

EIA1252: A Libraries strategy will show clear strategic intent for the development of the library service. Consultation results will be reviewed and linked to the strategy. The national How Good is Our Public Library Service framework indicates a strategy is required.

Other Formats Available

This document is also available in other languages, large print and audio format on request.

Arabic

هذه الوثيقة متاحة أيضا بلغات أخرى والأحرف الطباعية الكبيرة وبطريقة سمعية عند الطلب.



British Sign Language users can contact us via contactSCOTLAND-BSL, the on-line British Sign Language interpreting service on 01389737198

Chinese (Cantonese)

本文件也可應要求，製作成其他語文或特大字體版本，也可製作成錄音帶。

Gaelic

Tha an sgrìobhainn seo cuideachd ri fhaighinn ann an cànanan eile, ann an clò mòr, agus ann an cruth claisneachd ma thèid iarraidh

Hindi

अनुरोध पर यह दस्तावेज़ अन्य भाषाओं में, बड़े अक्षरों की छपाई और सुनने वाले माध्यम पर भी उपलब्ध है

Polish

Dokument ten jest na życzenie udostępniany także w innych wersjach językowych, w dużym druku lub w formie audio.

Punjabi

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਅਤੇ ਆਡੀਓ ਟੇਪ 'ਤੇ ਰਿਕਾਰਡ ਹੋਇਆ ਵੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।

Ukrainian

Цей документ також доступний іншими мовами, великим шрифтом та в аудіоформаті за запитом.

Urdu

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز دیگر زبانوں میں، بڑے حروف کی چھپائی اور سننے والے ذرائع پر بھی میسر ہے۔



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