



# *Presentation of findings*

Evaluation of the Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone innovation fund

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Image credit: [Little Red Book Photography](#), Plymouth

- **Aims of the evaluation were to:**
  - Provide an overview of activities and highlight major themes;
  - Provide an understanding of the differences these made to participants, libraries and local communities (project impacts);
  - Draw out main learning from approaches taken by projects;
- **Mixed method approach** that incorporated elements of self-evaluation.
- Evaluation grouped projects into **5 clusters**:



Arts & culture



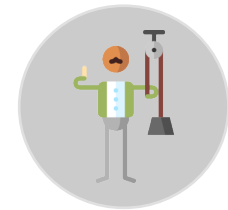
Digital



Families &  
Wellbeing



Literature & creative  
expression



Makerspaces



**The available evidence suggests that the LOFE fund provided people with opportunities to reduce their experience of disadvantage**

Engagement in co-design and co-production

Increased awareness of opportunities

Developed skills and confidence



**The available evidence suggests that library services have developed innovative practices through the fund**

Developed spaces

Improved digital confidence & skills among library staff

Improved understanding among library staff

Transformed service offers



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### Wider impacts on libraries

Improvements in staff morale

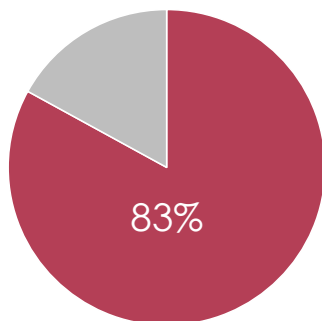
Transformation of library environments

Improved perceptions of library services

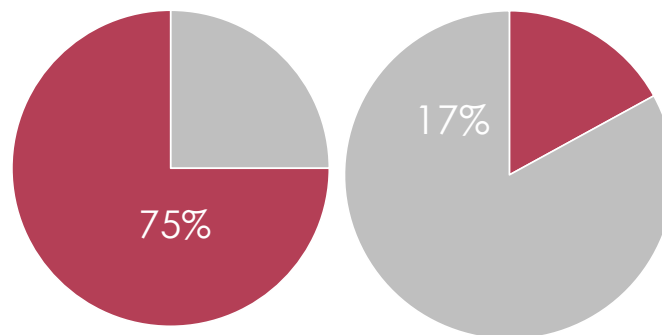
Improved relationships with local organisations

"I'd have to say that Storysmash helped me find my love for coding again and it's definitely helped me be more social, even if it was daunting at first. Having a group project has been really fun and inspiring!"  
Participant from Storysmash

In **Staffordshire**, 83% of participants in co-production sessions and focus groups were resident in postcode areas which experience high social-economic deprivation

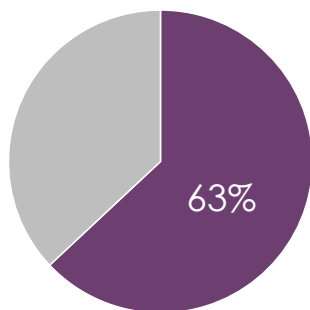


In **Hampshire**, 75% of participants said that the project had enabled them to improve contact with friends and family and 17% said that activities had helped them connect with new people



"I have a reason to leave the house."  
Participant, Shared reading group

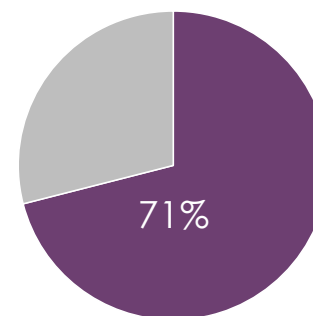
From one reading group in the **SW Region of Readers**, 63% of participants reported that their confidence had increased since joining and several participants commented that the group had either inspired them to read more or to start reading again



"It has been the best thing I have done for my mental health and confidence"

Participant, Shared reading group

In **Barnsley**, 71% of participants reported feeling very confident using a tablet device after taking part in the course



"I am using my iPad every day now (I'm beginning to show off...) - it's not shut in a drawer any more. It's magic!"

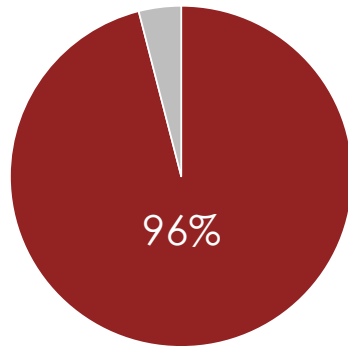
Participant (82)



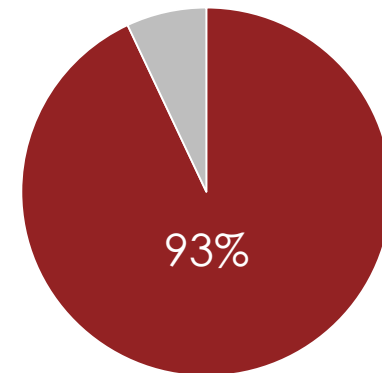
"I'm more mindful to [take] a few minutes of quiet to listen to my child playing; allowing her to just make [things], even if it's not what I thought or wanted. I don't need to control the situation, just enjoy the process with her."

Families and wellbeing activity

In **Manchester Libraries**, 96% of participants increased their knowledge about digital tools



93% of self-reflection sheets collected in **Staffordshire Libraries** show that the co-production sessions improved participants' knowledge on how to support child development





## Main findings: enablers and challenges



Enablers

In-kind contributions

Getting staff on board

Funding coordinator posts

Raising profile

Engaging vulnerable & marginalised groups

Informing design and delivery

Tailored approaches

Co-design and co-production

Embedding evaluation from project start

Convening multidisciplinary steering groups

**Staffing**

**Partnerships**

**Engaging participants**

**Project mgmt & delivery**

## Main findings: enablers and challenges



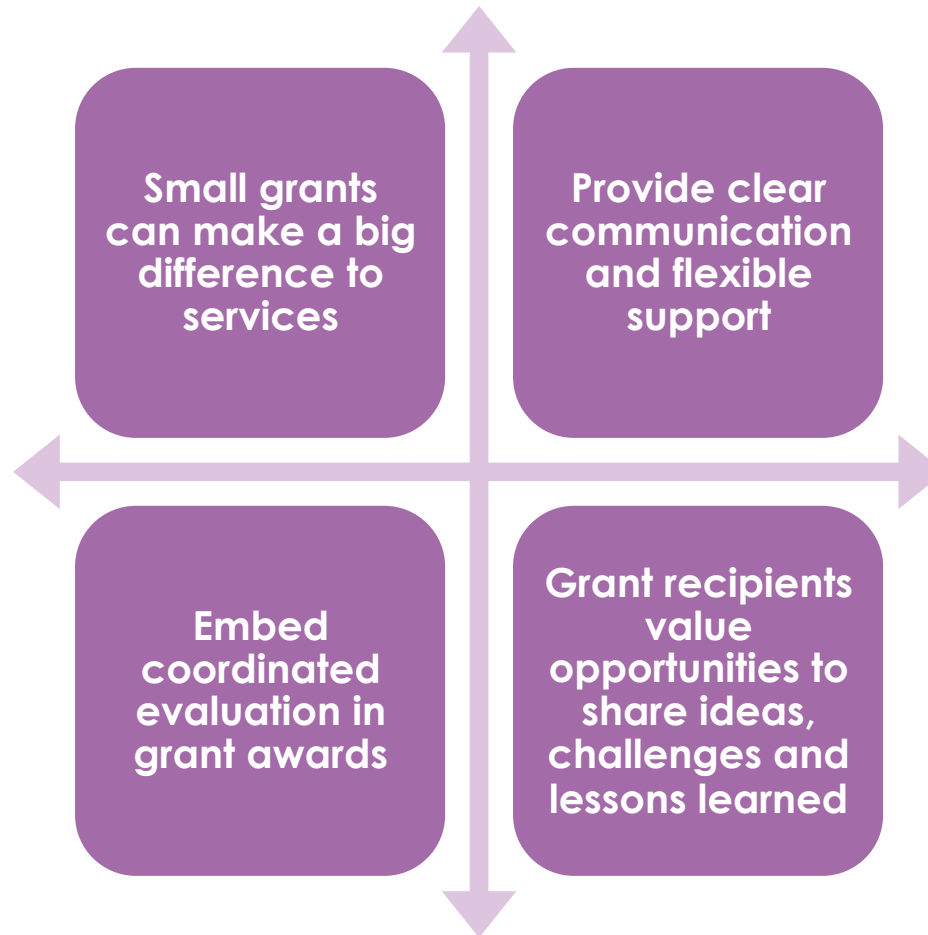
Challenges				
	Staffing	Partnerships	Engaging participants	Project mgmt & delivery
Challenges	Overstretched staff	Variable reliability of organisations	Facing behaviours that may challenge	Procurement delays
	Saturated volunteer market	Competing demands	Communicating new activities	Infrastructure
	Variable reliability of volunteers	Clashes of working styles		Steering group priorities
Solutions				
	Staffing	Partnerships	Engaging participants	Project mgmt & delivery
Solutions	Involve non-frontline staff	Regular monitoring	Build partnerships	Risk register
	Dedicated project officer	Governance	Taster sessions	Involve key stakeholders early on
	Resourcing plan	Back-up plan		



## Lessons Learned: supporting libraries



Project leads made a range of suggestions as to how DCMS and other organisations could support the funding of future projects:



# Lessons Learned: recommended approaches to achieving outcomes



The report proposes approaches to help achieve each of the following funder aims:

- How to build confidence of library staff in working with service users whose behaviours may challenge
- How to develop new ways of engaging vulnerable and marginalised groups who do not traditionally engage with library services
- How to engage staff and service users in activities that are new to them
- How to build confidence and skills among service users
- How to improve confidence of people with special educational needs and learning disability in engaging with literature
- How to improve digital literacy among people experiencing deprivation or isolation

<p><b>Funder aim: Improve confidence among service users whose behaviours may challenge</b></p> <p>Leads to: Improved perceptions of libraries; transformed service use</p> <p><b>Target group:</b> library staff</p> <p><b>How should services engage target groups?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brief staff on the role and benefits it will have for users, where no set clear</li> <li>• Foster staff owner as training new is engaged hard-to-reach groups</li> <li>• List of potential training: plan to staff training to groups</li> </ul> <p><b>What should the activity plan cover?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tailored and where further future training</li> <li>• Limited staff casual staff busier parts</li> </ul> <p><b>What challenges might exist and how can they be mitigated?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained of working challenge to staff are not</li> <li>• Increased group literacy orgs</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the potential for sustainability?</b></p>	<p><b>Funder aim: Develop new ways of engaging vulnerable and marginalised groups who do not traditionally engage with library services</b></p> <p>Leads to: Improved perceptions of libraries; transformed library services; increased service use</p> <p><b>Target groups:</b> hard-to-reach groups that are irregular users or non-users of library services</p> <p><b>How should services engage target groups?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships and approach target groups through community advocates or trusted community organisations which are based locally and/or specialise in supporting individuals</li> <li>• Tailor marketing approaches to target groups, such as social media marketing or face-to-face conversations within local communities</li> <li>• Advertise activities that address a primary need among target groups – such as holiday hunger</li> </ul> <p><b>What should the activity plan cover?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessment and mitigation outlining how to address preconceptions of library services</li> <li>• Co-production and co-design with an initial cohort of engaged hard-to-reach groups</li> <li>• Short, 'no obligation' faster sessions which can be used to gauge the appetite of target groups towards specific activities</li> </ul> <p><b>What challenges might exist and how can they be mitigated?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chain of working cultures with partner organisations from different sectors – staff need to be open to new ways of working and willing to find work-arounds</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the potential for sustainability?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful activities can be incorporated into new engagement strategies</li> <li>• However, it can often take time to successfully engage hard-to-reach groups and so many of these approaches are dependent on continued resource to support staff time and/or volunteers to foster those relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the potential for scaling up or replicating activities in other contexts?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be more difficult to identify some community organisations in rural locations</li> </ul>	<p><b>Funder aim: Increase confidence of people with special educational needs and learning disability in engaging with literature</b></p> <p>Leads to: Increased service use; improved educational needs and learning disability</p> <p><b>Target group:</b> people with special educational needs and learning disability</p> <p><b>How should services engage target groups?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships and approach target groups through community advocates or trusted community organisations which are based locally and/or specialise in supporting individuals</li> <li>• Tailor marketing approaches to target groups, such as social media marketing or face-to-face conversations within local communities</li> <li>• Advertise activities that address a primary need among target groups – such as holiday hunger</li> </ul> <p><b>What should the activity plan cover?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk assessment and mitigation outlining how to address preconceptions of library services</li> <li>• Co-production and co-design with an initial cohort of engaged hard-to-reach groups</li> <li>• Short, 'no obligation' faster sessions which can be used to gauge the appetite of target groups towards specific activities</li> </ul> <p><b>What challenges might exist and how can they be mitigated?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chain of working cultures with partner organisations from different sectors – staff need to be open to new ways of working and willing to find work-arounds</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the potential for sustainability?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful activities can be incorporated into new engagement strategies</li> <li>• However, it can often take time to successfully engage hard-to-reach groups and so many of these approaches are dependent on continued resource to support staff time and/or volunteers to foster those relationships</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the potential for scaling up or replicating activities in other contexts?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It may be more difficult to identify some community organisations in rural locations</li> </ul>
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## Recommendations

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The following recommendations have emerged from the delivery and evaluation of the LOFE fund:



Award funding in a way that focuses library activities on specific audiences and outcomes



Build in evaluation from the start of a project



Give libraries flexibility around their use of funding



Encourage (or require) libraries to reach out to local partners in order to deliver projects



Use programmes like this as a vehicle for building networks and learning across the sector

*Thank you.*



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