

POLICY REPORT

Shining a light

The future of
public libraries
across the UK
and Ireland

Dr Jenny Peachey



CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

ABOUT THE CARNEGIE UK TRUST

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913.

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Key Statistics

AROUND $1\frac{1}{2}$ of people use the library in each jurisdiction



OVER $2\frac{2}{5}$ of library users in each jurisdiction use the library at least once every month

AROUND $3\frac{3}{4}$ of people in each jurisdiction say libraries important to the community



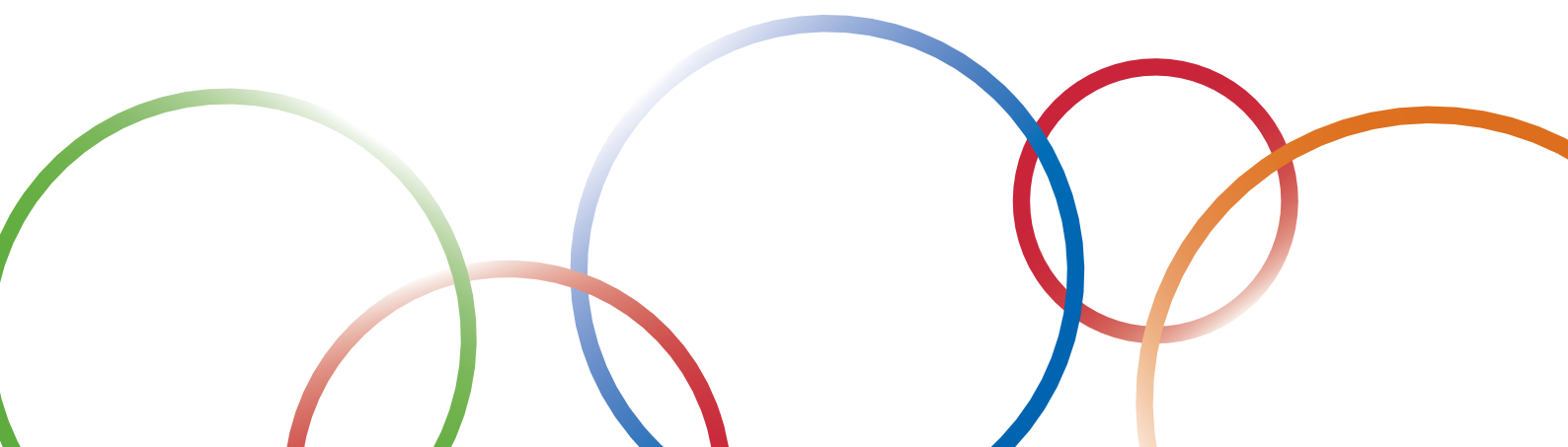
AROUND $2\frac{2}{5}$ of people in each jurisdiction say libraries important to themselves personally



OVER $1\frac{1}{2}$ of people in each jurisdiction say that providing better information on what services libraries offer would encourage personal library use



21% TO 30% of people across the five jurisdictions who rarely or never read books use the library



Foreword

The Carnegie UK Trust has supported public libraries for over 100 years, recognising the significant and enduring contribution that these valuable public resources make to improving the wellbeing of individuals and communities. They are treasured resources in the heart of local communities and they play a vital role in supporting the acquisition of knowledge, cultural engagement, democratic participation and service delivery. The best public libraries enable citizens to fulfil their potential and aspire to greater things.

Over time, the way in which the Trust supports public libraries has changed. In the first half of the 20th century Andrew Carnegie's endowment enabled the building of over 600 libraries across the UK and Ireland. The sole condition attached to these gifts was that local authorities should increase the level of local taxation (the rates) to pay for the staffing and stocking of the library.

Today, the Trust seeks to support libraries by developing innovative policy and practice projects. This includes our innovation and leadership development programme Carnegie Library Lab, our advocacy resource Speaking Volumes and our support for the development of Scotland's first national library strategy 'Ambition and Opportunity'.

In 2011 we conducted research into public attitudes towards libraries in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland. This research was ground

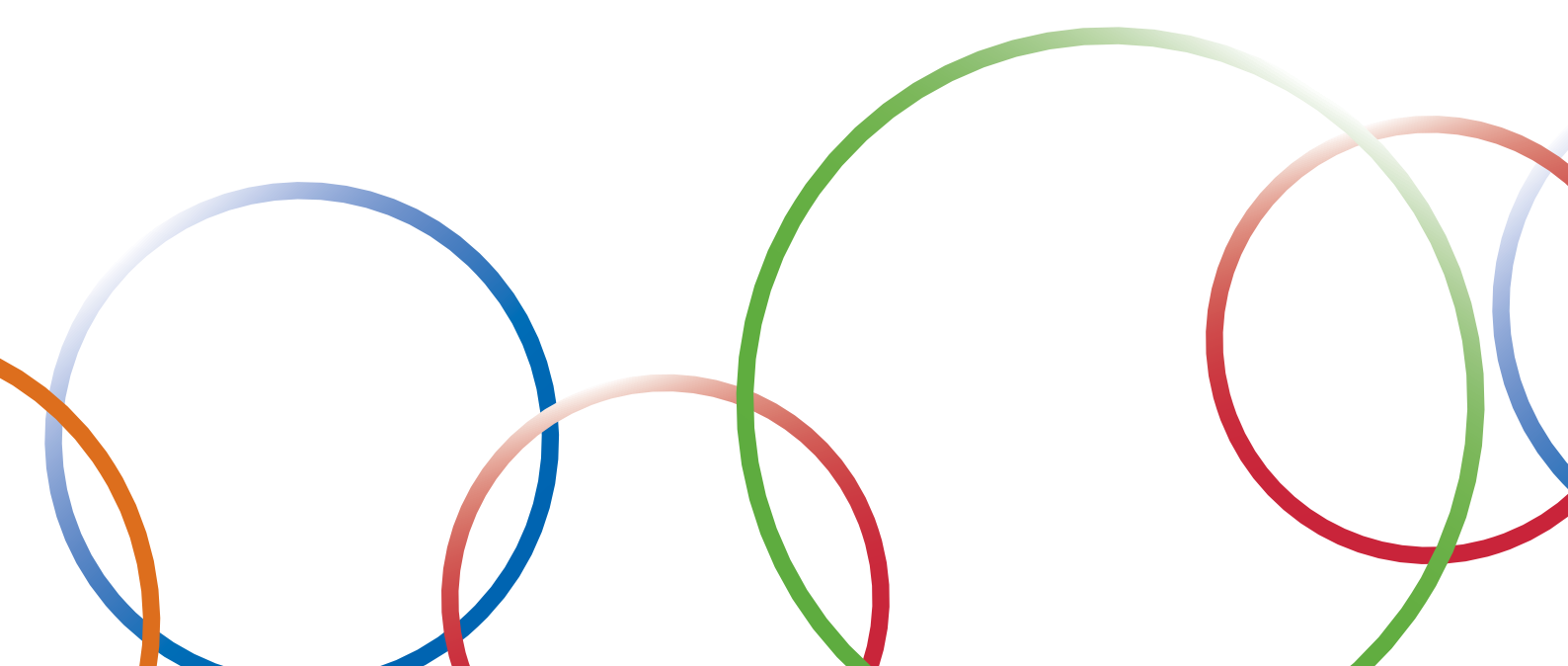
breaking. For the first time comparable data was generated across the individual jurisdictions of the UK and Ireland. Now, we have rerun this survey to examine whether, five years on, attitudes towards libraries and levels of use have changed. We've also added some new questions to help explore important new issues such as the role of volunteers and potential changes in services.

We are sharing our research findings through a range of publications under the title 'Shining a Light' with the aim of both illuminating the state of play and showing a path forward. We have produced five individual country factsheets that show how each jurisdiction is faring. We have an accessible data booklet which gives the big picture 'headline findings' from across the jurisdictions and enables comparison between the jurisdictions. We also have a technical report by Ipsos MORI which compares our findings with existing research.

This paper draws on the current context in which public libraries operate as well as our research findings to set out the actions we believe are required to enable public libraries to continue to improve people's wellbeing for many years in the future.



Martyn Evans, CEO



1. Introduction

Over the past five years the role, purpose and future of the public library service has been the subject of passionate discussion and intense debate across the UK and Ireland. Reductions in local authority resources, with the likelihood of further financial pressure to come, the public service reform agenda and a revolution in digital technology have provided a crucible for these debates.

There is no doubt that public libraries face unprecedented challenges and very real threats. In 2016 the BBC reported that across the UK there had been more than 340 library closures and 8,000 library job losses since 2010.¹ In response, the vociferous and visible campaign against the closure of library buildings has swelled, in England in particular. The campaigns have often focused on specific local decisions but point to broader trends and pressures.

Five years ago, when the Trust first conducted research into public libraries, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland had a clear strategic framework for the library service. Now all five jurisdictions have set out a strategic approach to public libraries. The Society of Chief Librarians has launched a range of 'Universal Offers' – a positive vision of what public libraries can offer citizens in the realm of reading, information, digital, health and learning across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A Libraries Taskforce is taking forward a national approach to public libraries in England and an implementation group is advancing the recommendations from Scotland's first ever national public library strategy. There has been an emergence of a range of publications and tools seeking to measure and demonstrate the value and impact of public libraries.

Two pictures of the public library service often surface in discussions around the future of libraries. On the one hand, there is an image of a service in sharp and dramatic decline, with reduced resources, declines in book lending, fewer library buildings, fewer paid staff² and compromised models of service delivery. On the other, there is a portrayal of a forward-thinking, innovative, popular and flourishing service with a high level of use, of new 'super' city libraries,³ of pioneering models of service delivery,⁴ of a unique and growing

role in the knowledge economy, and of enhanced digital offers⁵ to further learning and equality of opportunity. There is truth, of course, in both views, but also a severe tension between those who adopt an optimistic narrative about the future of libraries and those who fear for their future and campaign on the basis that they are in crisis.

This report seeks to contribute to the debate by sharing the 'state of play' for public libraries in the UK and Ireland revealed by our research. We also set out five lessons, drawn directly from the data for how libraries can continue to improve people's wellbeing both in today's political, economic and social context and into the future.

These lessons are as follows:

- Demonstrate value to policy makers, decision makers and funders to maximise public and other investment
- Increase focus on tailored, personalised services whilst maintaining a focus on delivering a universal service
- Accelerate the development of a user-centred, data rich service with a strong online presence
- Invest in innovation, leadership and outcomes-based partnerships
- Enhance learning between libraries and across jurisdictions

SWOT ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

There are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with public libraries and their future as a core public service.

S

- Trusted, neutral spaces
- Networked
- Universal service 'for all'
- Qualified staff
- Libraries are seen as important for communities
- Strong and trusted brand
- Strong latent support and positive sentiment for libraries among local communities
- Growing confidence in partnership working to deliver shared outcomes and joined up services

W

- Premises may be intimidating to some groups
- Online digital presence and digital offer requires investment and development
- Physical constraints of some premises with many requiring refurbishment or modernisation
- Community support and positive sentiment is not matched by levels of use
- Libraries are much less likely to be seen relevant for people personally
- Public perception of library brand does not always reflect the library offer
- Debates regarding libraries can be informed by nostalgia and emotive assertion rather than evidence
- Skills development required to enable the development of a workforce able to deliver the potential positive outcomes for evolving community needs
- Limited evidence on full impact of libraries deliver for local communities

O

- Capacity to contribute to many policy and social goals
- Capacity to contribute to digital participation and engagement
- Capacity to contribute to knowledge economy
- Capacity to contribute to education, an informed citizenry, health literacy and culture
- Capacity to harness skilled volunteers seeking to compliment the role of paid staff
- Capacity to carve out 21st century contribution in relation to discovering and navigating information and learning sources, and enabling creativity and co-creation of resources

T

- Decrease in funding available to local authorities
- Physical constraints of some facilities
- Overall decline in levels of use and book lending make it easier for local authorities looking to cut services
- Competition both for use of leisure time and from alternative providers of services traditionally offered by libraries
- Lack of understanding and buy-in among decision makers and the public regarding the broader aims and purpose of libraries
- Potential fragmentation of library offer where there are increases in volunteer-run libraries
- Dominant media narrative about libraries is negative
- Challenges in attracting new talent to the sector

2. Public libraries: what are we talking about?

THE 'WHAT' OF LIBRARIES

Public libraries occupy an unusual place in the public service landscape: an extensive network of known public spaces at the heart of communities, they are free to enter and open to all. There are around 4,000 public library premises across the UK and Ireland and the service is delivered by a mixture of librarians, library staff and volunteers. The service provides access to books, information technology, activities, informal learning opportunities, people (staff, volunteers and community members) and a safe space. In some cases, libraries also provide services and initiatives delivered with, or by, other organisations (eg MacMillan Cancer Support, Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Reading Agency).

THE 'WHY' OF LIBRARIES

The best public libraries enable citizens to fulfil their potential and act as a trusted and safe civic space that enables engagement and participation. This is reflected in the vision and mission statements of various national strategies, as demonstrated in Table 1.

When Andrew Carnegie made grants to found public libraries in the 20th century, he described libraries as 'instruments for the elevation of the masses of the people.' Here, public libraries are an enabler, giving individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential, live fuller lives, make more of what they have, discover new worlds and aspire to greater things.

Table 1 – The 'why' of public libraries across the UK and Ireland

Why	
 England	<p>'Libraries are vital community hubs – bringing people together and giving them access to the services and support they need to help them live better.'</p> <p>Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021</p>
 Northern Ireland	<p>'A flexible and responsive library service which provides a dynamic focal point in the community and assists people to fulfil their potential.'</p> <p>Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries: Principles and priorities for the development of public libraries in Northern Ireland</p>
 Ireland	<p>'Ireland's public libraries promote community cohesion and well-being, economic growth, and cultural identity.'</p> <p>Opportunities for All: The public library as a catalyst for economic, social and cultural development</p>
 Scotland	<p>'Scotland's public libraries are trusted guides connecting all of our people to the world's possibilities and opportunities ... part of a shared civic ambition to fulfil the potential of individuals and communities ... add[ing] to Scotland's social, economic and cultural wellbeing.'</p> <p>Ambition and Opportunity: A strategy for public libraries in Scotland 2015-2020</p>
 Wales	<p>'Libraries will inspire the people of Wales to enjoy reading, enhance their knowledge and skills, to enrich their quality of life and empower them to realise their full potential.'</p> <p>Libraries Inspire: The Strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-2016</p>

As an enabler, public libraries contribute to economic, social, cultural and educational policy goals, improving people's wellbeing in ways that are often unseen or unrecognised. For example:

- Economic enabler – Libraries can help jobseekers find opportunities and prepare themselves for interview, offer courses and digital skills training (helping people manage information, create content and communicate with others online), provide essential support to people applying for welfare benefits, and offer advice and support for the development of small businesses, including support around protecting intellectual property.
- Social hub – Libraries can connect communities and individuals and provide services targeting people living on a low income and those that are lonely or elderly. They can also provide information about health and health services, as well as books on prescription, and safe spaces for voluntary sector organisations to provide health information and advice. Mobile services can help tackle rural isolation, whilst services to people in care homes or to those who are house bound provide important social contact for those people.
- Cultural centre – Libraries provide spaces in which people can be creative and can also act as venues for concerts, exhibitions or performances. They can enable groups with shared interests to meet in a safe space and support self-expression in places where there are no other options.
- Learning hub – Libraries can help people understand and act on information thereby empowering them and helping them make informed decisions and choices about their lives. They tackle illiteracy through encouraging reading for pleasure, introducing young families to books and reading, running English language classes for new citizens and being a supportive environment for children after school.



Library as social hub

- Tackling isolation**
 - services for older people, homeless people, disabled people
 - outreach to prisons and care homes
 - outreach to disadvantaged families
 - services for linguistic minorities
 - services for people suffering domestic abuse
- Library as community hub**
 - information about services
 - access to public services
- Promoting health**
 - information about health and health services
 - books as therapy
 - provide community health services in safe environment
 - partnerships with voluntary sector in library
- Connecting citizens**
 - information about local and national issues
 - space for public meetings
 - legal services in the library
- Promoting environmental awareness**
 - information about recycling
 - information about volunteering

Library as cultural centre

- Promoting literature**
 - author talks and book groups
 - book festivals
 - writers in residence
 - support for self-publishing
- BOOK FESTIVAL**
- Making music**
 - access to CDs and sheet music
 - young people making music
 - rhythm and rhyme for early years
 - library as music venue
- Art, dance and drama**
 - space for exhibitions, plays and dance
 - classes and workshops
- Creative spaces**
 - maker spaces
 - 3D printers
 - media workshops
- Local history resource**
 - access to family and local history material
 - learning sessions on local and family history
 - local people contributing to resources
- Library as cinema**
 - film clubs in libraries
 - DVDs to hire



Library as learning hub

- Supporting literacy**
 - reading for pleasure
 - Summer Reading Challenge
 - breakfast clubs for hostel dwellers
 - support for dyslexia
- English language**
 - language courses
- Early years and school age**
 - books for babies
 - homework support
- Digital literacy**
 - courses and support for all
- Lifelong learning**
 - filling the gaps in formal education
 - supporting informal learning
 - signposting to adult learning

Library as economic enabler

- Maximising income**
 - benefits information and support
 - make the most of your income
 - CAB services in library
 - smart meter loans
- Encouraging enterprise**
 - advice and support for small businesses
 - business resources in libraries
 - support for social enterprise
 - providing co-working spaces
 - maker spaces in libraries
- Access to employment**
 - job clubs
 - support for online job applications
 - access to computers and wifi
 - supporting digital skills



3. Demonstrate value to policy makers, decision makers and funders to maximise public and other investment

Public libraries continue to be a very well-used and highly valued service. Around one in two people in England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales use libraries and around three-quarters say that libraries are essential or very important to their communities. Of those that use libraries, over two in five use a library every month.

We need to highlight and share more widely the significant public engagement that libraries achieve every day. Few other public or charitable services, if any, can demonstrate this sustained level of voluntary citizen engagement across a wide range of channels, issues and offerings over many decades. This should be celebrated and be the cornerstone of evidence-based arguments about the importance of investing in library services.

As public libraries are increasingly placed in competition with other vital local services and resources, it is essential that they are able to continually demonstrate their value to decision makers and those that hold the purse strings, including how they work with partners to deliver shared priorities.

Through our work *Speaking Volumes: the impact of public libraries on wellbeing*, we collated a selection of over 200 case studies and examples of how public libraries deliver on key policy priorities, improve opportunities for citizens and make a meaningful contribution to social and individual wellbeing.⁶ The examples show how public libraries create opportunities, tackle disadvantage, create safer and stronger communities, help people live longer, healthier lives, create a vibrant creative economy, support art and culture, and help people into work.

Demonstrating value and impact requires clearly aligning library services with community needs and the priorities and policies of funders, policymakers and decision makers. Following from this, delivery of new strategies need to be monitored to ensure that library services, decision makers and funders have a mutual

understanding and recognition of the relationship between the role of public libraries and local and national government goals.

The links between the activities of libraries and the goals of funders and decision makers need to be backed by robust, persuasive local evidence, set within a national context. This evidence will require a shift away from measuring inputs towards methods for measuring participation and impact.

Again, expanding an existing focus on book borrowing and footfall to measuring participation in all programmes of activity and courses would provide a strong incentive to libraries to develop their services in new ways and in line with community needs. This will need to be supplemented by deeper assessments of the impact of the programmes on participants. In turn, this will help public libraries make the case as to how it is that they change people's lives.

Being able to draw on evidence of impact will enable public libraries to plan, strategise and share learning within the sector, provide the basis for demonstrating their worth to decision-makers and funders outside of the sector and ensure libraries are accountable to those that fund them. Moreover, better evidence has an important role to play in helping to persuade those that are sceptical about the role and value of public libraries and in moving the conversation about the value of public libraries beyond the believers, advocates and critical friends that are already passionate about the value and role of libraries.

AROUND
1/2 of people in each jurisdiction use libraries

AROUND
3/4 of people in each jurisdiction say libraries important to communities

Chart 1: Library use 2011 and 2016

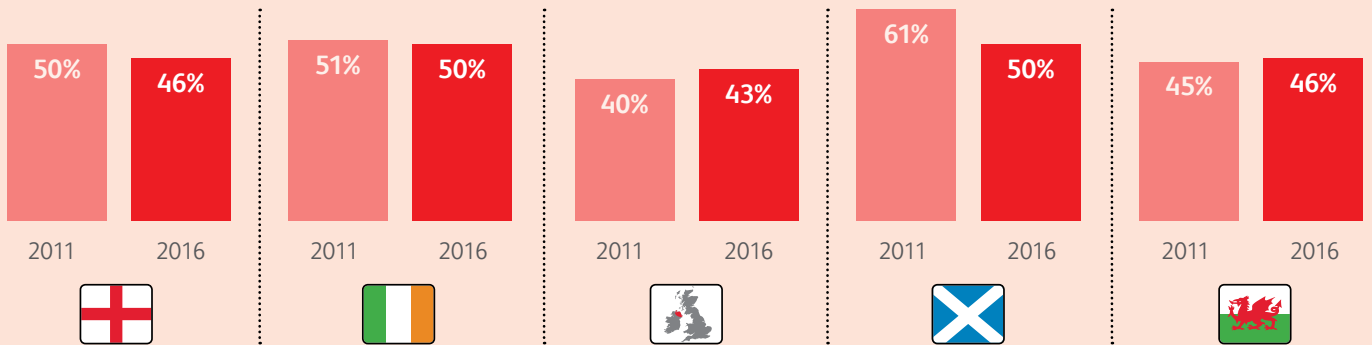
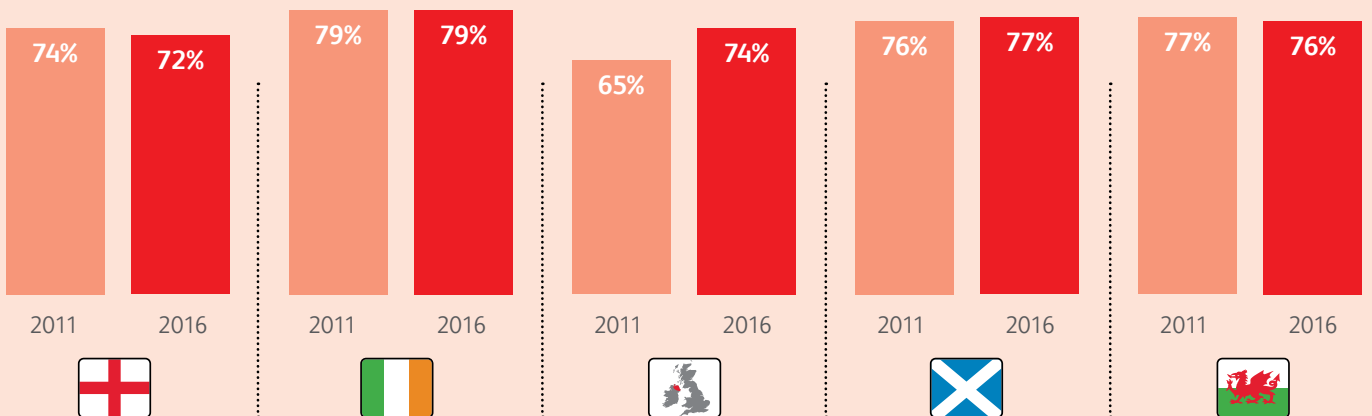


Chart 2: Importance of the library to the community 2011 and 2016





4. Increase focus on tailored, personalised services whilst maintaining a focus on delivering a universal service

Public libraries are a service for all. Whilst this is a great strength, our data demonstrates the challenge inherent in being a universal service when there is no universal set of needs: people continue to place importance in public libraries as community services, but they are much less likely to regard libraries as important to themselves personally.

In each jurisdiction, around three-quarters (72%-79%) of people reported that public libraries are essential or very important to the community whilst only 37%-44% responded that public libraries are essential or very important to them personally. The level of support for public libraries as community resources is also not matched by an equivalent level of personal use, with around one in two people in each jurisdiction (43%-50%) using the library.

This begs the question of how people who recognise the importance of libraries for others – but not for themselves – view libraries. Is it that they don't recognise what a library offers as relevant to them or is it the case that the library does, in fact, have little to offer them?

The first point relates to a need to build on more effective communications and branding. The second point touches on whether libraries should promote and further develop a clear, core universal offer (for example, communicating a safe, trusted space and free access to materials etc) or focus on promoting and developing more targeted offers for particular groups (for example, reminiscence groups for those with dementia, which build upon the safe and trusted space that libraries offer).

Our research indicates that there is an urgent need to improve communications and branding: many people are unaware of what public libraries offer. Across the jurisdictions, around 40%-60% of respondents stated that being able to look for or reserve books online would encourage greater library use. Yet being able to look for or reserve books online is a universal service in

England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.⁷ Furthermore, both library users and non-users are unaware of this particular service, with 57%-73% of users and 29%-45% of non-users claiming that being able to look for or reserve books online would encourage them to use the library more. In fact, providing better information on what services libraries offer was one of the most popular suggested improvements across all jurisdictions⁸ and the single most popular suggested improvement in England, Ireland and Wales.⁹

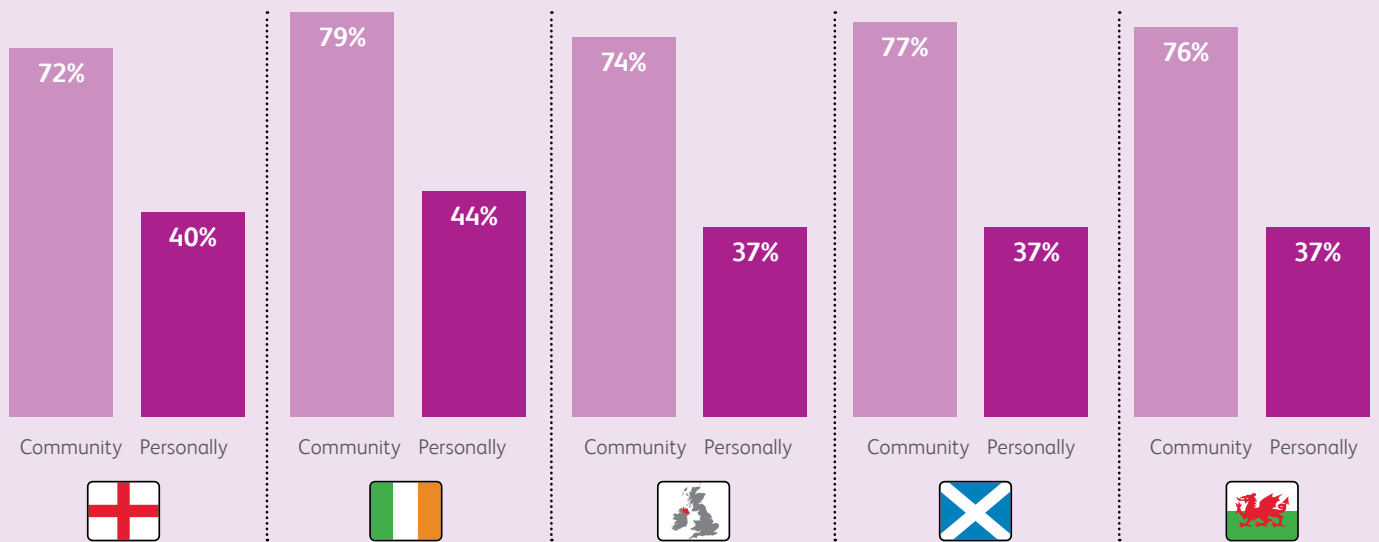
Lack of awareness about what libraries offer means that the service may be misunderstood and underutilised by individuals and groups who could benefit from it.

Our data on readership also points to the need for those involved in the delivery of public library services to discuss and debate whether, as a universal service, public libraries should strive to meet the needs of all demographic groups within a community, or to build on their success with particular demographic groups, and to identify ways forward.

When looking at how many books, if any, library users read or listened to,¹⁰ we found evidence in sympathy with the idea that the primary focus of libraries ought to be books *and* the evidence with which to challenge this view. On the one hand, logistic regression¹¹ reveals that being a prolific reader is a predictor for the likelihood of library use and frequency of use across all jurisdictions. On the other hand, there is a sizeable percentage (21%-30%) of people across the five jurisdictions who rarely or never read books that nevertheless use the library.

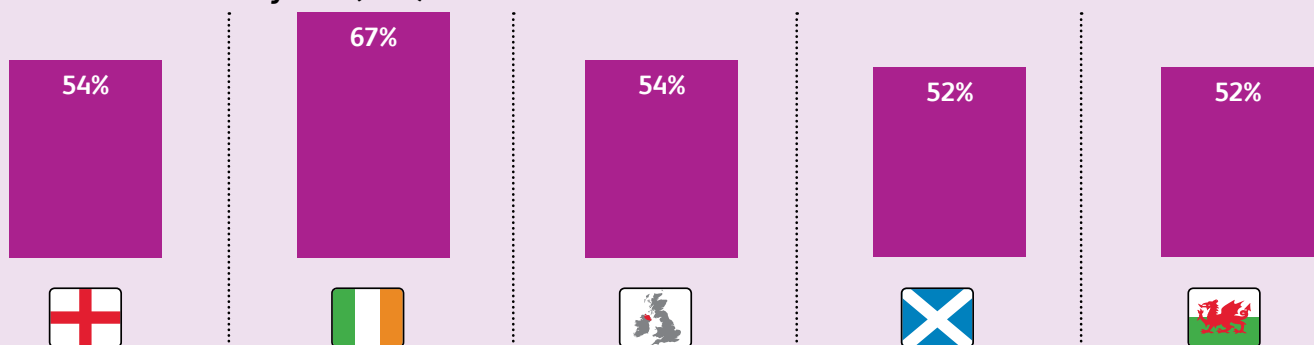
The challenge lies in developing services that continue to be attractive to prolific readers and services that are appealing to those who are not – whilst not inadvertently dissuading either group from using the library.

Chart 3: Comparison of the importance people place in public libraries for the community and for themselves personally (2016)



As libraries come under increasing pressure, there is an onus on those of us that value them to consider what we can do to support them.

Chart 4: Providing better information on what services libraries offer would encourage me to use the library more (2016)



Part of the way for libraries to make themselves more relevant may be to promote themselves as working on a range of issues that appeal to people. Librarians are trained information professionals whose role is rooted in enabling access to a very wide range of published materials. Through this they aim to support educational advancement, acquisition of knowledge and civic and democratic participation. Currently, librarians are positioning themselves in a world where tremendous amounts of information, knowledge and culture can be accessed 24 hours a day and almost instantaneously. As information professionals, librarians are well positioned to help people to navigate the vast array of information and knowledge available online. They can also equip people with the knowledge and tools to make informed decisions about whether and how they might like to protect their online data privacy as they navigate the web to access information and pursue their interests.



5. Accelerate the development of a user-centred, data rich service with a strong online presence

Public libraries remain an extraordinarily well used public service. Our data shows that across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland nearly half of us are library users. This level of usage has broadly held up since 2011, despite significant pressures upon library services during that time.

There are however, some challenges. Usage in Scotland has dropped by 11 percentage points, although Scotland still ranks top (jointly with Ireland) in terms of the level of use across the jurisdictions. Perhaps more significantly, our research has revealed some marked changes in how often people use libraries. Although more than 40% of library users use library services every month ('frequent users'), there is a clear decline in frequent use across all five jurisdictions. The decline ranges from six to 16 percentage points, with Wales seeing the sharpest drop in frequent use by far. The decline in frequent use is statistically significant in all jurisdictions, with the exception of Northern Ireland. This tells us that people are either choosing not to use the library as much as they once did – or are finding it more difficult to do so.

Aside from challenging debates about funding, there are steps that library services can take to make the most of the impressive usage levels they continue to enjoy whilst mitigating some of the clear emerging risks to this.

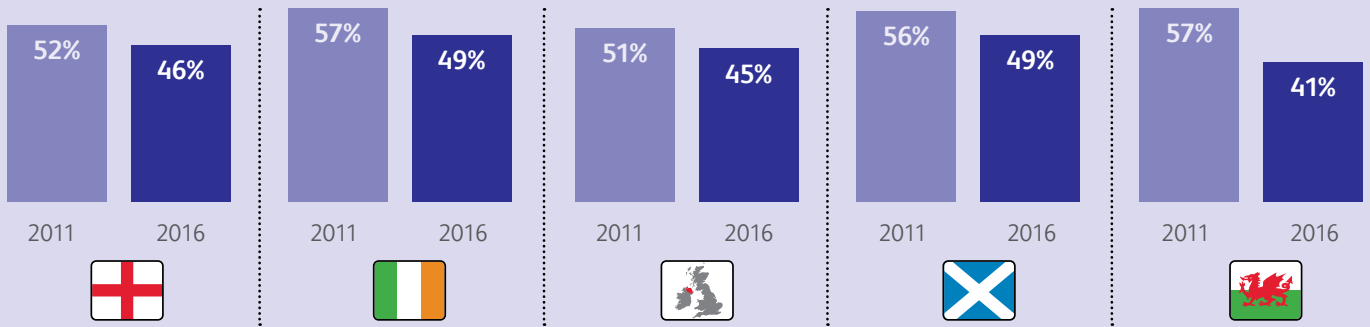
There is more that libraries can do to improve their understanding and engagement with the people and communities they serve. Given the pressures on all public services and the need to clearly demonstrate how they are meeting people's needs, it is also critical that public libraries continue to build a better understanding of both their users and non-users. This is essential in order to inform and direct service

development in individual libraries and across the service as a whole. A better understanding is required of why people are not using libraries as much or as frequently as they used to. Understanding these issues could help libraries develop relevant services that meet people wherever they are and at a time convenient to them. One way forward in this regard could be for public libraries to explore ethical and safe ways of drawing on the data they gather to monitor, hone and develop their services to benefit all on an ongoing basis.

The world in which public, private and third sector services are delivered is one where personalised, responsive digital platforms available through multiple channels are fast becoming the norm. These online platforms have altered and shaped the digital economy, bringing with them efficiency gains and digital value. This drive to deliver public services online and consumer demand for instant access to goods, services and content 24-7 points to a need to develop an enhanced digital offer to deliver more personalised services and ensure people continue to be attracted to the service and benefit from engaging with it.

Policy makers and practitioners should explore ways to deliver a new digital offer with some urgency. This will enable the public library service to meet people where they are, wherever they are, at any time. Building on the good work in Northern Ireland and Wales, this digital offer could not only enable access to content in a range of formats and offer an excellent transactional service, but provide a transformative and enriched experience that allows for engagement and opens up new opportunities and possibilities for service and user alike. It is not that the digital offer should replace the physical offer, rather that public libraries must be ubiquitous physical and digital spaces.

Chart 5: Frequency of library use 2011-2016



* Frequent use: where the library is used at least once a month





6. Invest in innovation, leadership and outcomes-based partnerships

There is an ongoing need for public libraries to cultivate their ability to future-gaze, innovate and test out ideas in order to anticipate and meet community needs. We found that since 2011, there has been an increase in the proportion of people who would be encouraged to use the library in England, Ireland and Wales if a range of suggested changes and improvements were made.¹²

Across all five jurisdictions, the most commonly mentioned changes which would encourage more use were: providing other council services in library buildings; providing better information on what services libraries offer; a café or coffee shop on site; and offering more events (such as author events, gigs, or film screenings).

The findings point to both an increased appetite for change in some jurisdictions and how the needs and views of communities evolve as communities change. The challenge for public libraries is therefore both how to implement service changes to meet current needs and how to inculcate flexibility and adaptability to continually respond to changing needs and demographics.

It is important that a consistent and enduring set of values underpin service development. This will ensure

that the ethos and unique selling points of public libraries endure as services develop. Generating wide scale buy-in of values and cultivation of a learning culture where learning and challenging the status quo is rewarded will, in turn, require strong leadership.

In a context where resources are under pressure and the development capacity of services has been diminished, working in partnership with 'unusual friends' can provide an effective way of delivering positive outcomes for all. Moreover, collaboration with those that are not naturally aligned with public libraries can be an effective form of advocacy for the library service and what it has to offer potential partners and the public.

It follows that there is a need to invest in staff and for resources to be committed to enable public libraries to continue to deliver on the local and national outcomes in relevant and innovative ways.

It is worth noting that our research found that public opinion is largely against volunteer-run libraries. Of course, what people say and what they do differs and people may well still use volunteer run services in practice. However, it is a marker that people trust and value libraries run by staff.

A consistent and enduring set of values will ensure that the ethos and unique selling points of public libraries endure as services develop. New York Public library has a set of core values to guide its work. These are:

- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We take responsibility for delivering on our commitments and for the stewardship of our materials and spaces.
- **EXCELLENCE:** Only the finest of everything is good enough.
- **EXPERTISE:** We are relentless in our efforts to better understand our communities, our collections, and our users.
- **FREEDOM:** We are free and open to all. We treat everyone with respect and compassion.
- **INNOVATION:** We are always learning. We are constantly exploring new ways of doing things better and doing better things.
- **PASSION:** We love the Library, we love New York, and we love what we do.
- **TEAMWORK:** We celebrate the diversity of our experiences and build connections. We trust each other.



7. Enhance learning between libraries and across jurisdictions

There are similarities in our library data from across the five jurisdictions but there are also many differences. **Sharing learning and best practice both within and between libraries and across the five jurisdictions** could provide helpful insights for public library services across the board.

For example, across all jurisdictions women are more likely to use libraries than men, but this gap in use by gender is not statistically significant in Scotland. Moreover, Scotland has the highest percentage of men using the library of all jurisdictions. Can anything be learned from the Scottish experience to attract more men to library services in other jurisdictions?

The aim would not be to transfer policies from one library or place to another but rather to translate the learning from one area in a way that others can act upon. Those working across the public library sector are currently very good at attending conferences and networking beyond their jurisdiction, but shared learning does not happen naturally and it requires sustained effort.

It is important that **library leadership and representative bodies, Trusts and Foundations consider how best to support cross-jurisdictional learning across all levels of the library service.**



8. Recommendations

Public libraries have the ability to contribute to individual and community wellbeing and to many of the priorities of local and national government. Despite considerable pressures, public libraries are in a strong position – they continue to be used by about half of the population and are valued as community service. However, frequency of use is declining and people are less likely to see the service as of value to them personally.

Moving forward, library services and their advocates need to be future focused and outward looking, and resist the temptation to embrace a backwards-looking ethos. Advocates need to decide and determine how public libraries can make a difference – and where they can make more of a difference – to ensure that public libraries are seen as part of the solution to what it is communities, policy makers, funders and decision makers are seeking to achieve.



Demonstrate value to policy makers, decision makers and funders to maximise public and other investment

- Library services to align services with community needs and the priorities and policies of funders and public policy decision makers
- Local authorities and national governments to renew their focus on how their library services can help them deliver a wide range of their policy goals
- Local authorities, policy makers and representative bodies¹³ to continue to undertake detailed research and work to support libraries to more effectively demonstrate their impact in relation to national and local policy goals and frameworks
- Local authorities, policy makers, representative bodies and library services to explore the best ways of using data to demonstrate libraries' impact
- When presented with evidence, local and national governments to engage with the data and provide support where appropriate
- Progress on all national library strategies should be monitored closely and subject to parliamentary scrutiny
- Refreshed strategies should be developed according to the appropriate timescales in each jurisdiction



Increase focus on tailored, personalised services whilst maintaining a focus on delivering a universal service

- Representative bodies and library services to discuss and debate the balance between universal and tailored offers and identify ways forward
- Local authorities, representative bodies and library services to explore effective and targeted communication and promotion of both universal and tailored services to specific target groups
- Policy makers, representative bodies, library services and national and local governments to explore how librarians develop their role as advocates for citizens' rights in relation to how their data is protected online
- Libraries to further develop and be recognised as community-based expert resource to help people maximise the advantages of the digital world and minimise its risks
- Library services to use data and insight to identify why different groups engage with the library to facilitate the tailoring of offers and targeting of communication



Accelerate the development of a user-centred, data rich service with a strong online presence

- Library services to strengthen their use of data to proactively develop and improve services for users and to attract non-users in a way that protects users and fits within data protection protocol
- Library services, policy makers and local authorities to look at improving data sharing across services in order to develop services in a way that protects users and fits within data protection protocols
- Policy makers, representative bodies and library services to explore the best ways of using data to demonstrate impact
- Policy makers to explore and test the possibility of a Single Digital Presence for public libraries in England and including other jurisdictions if possible



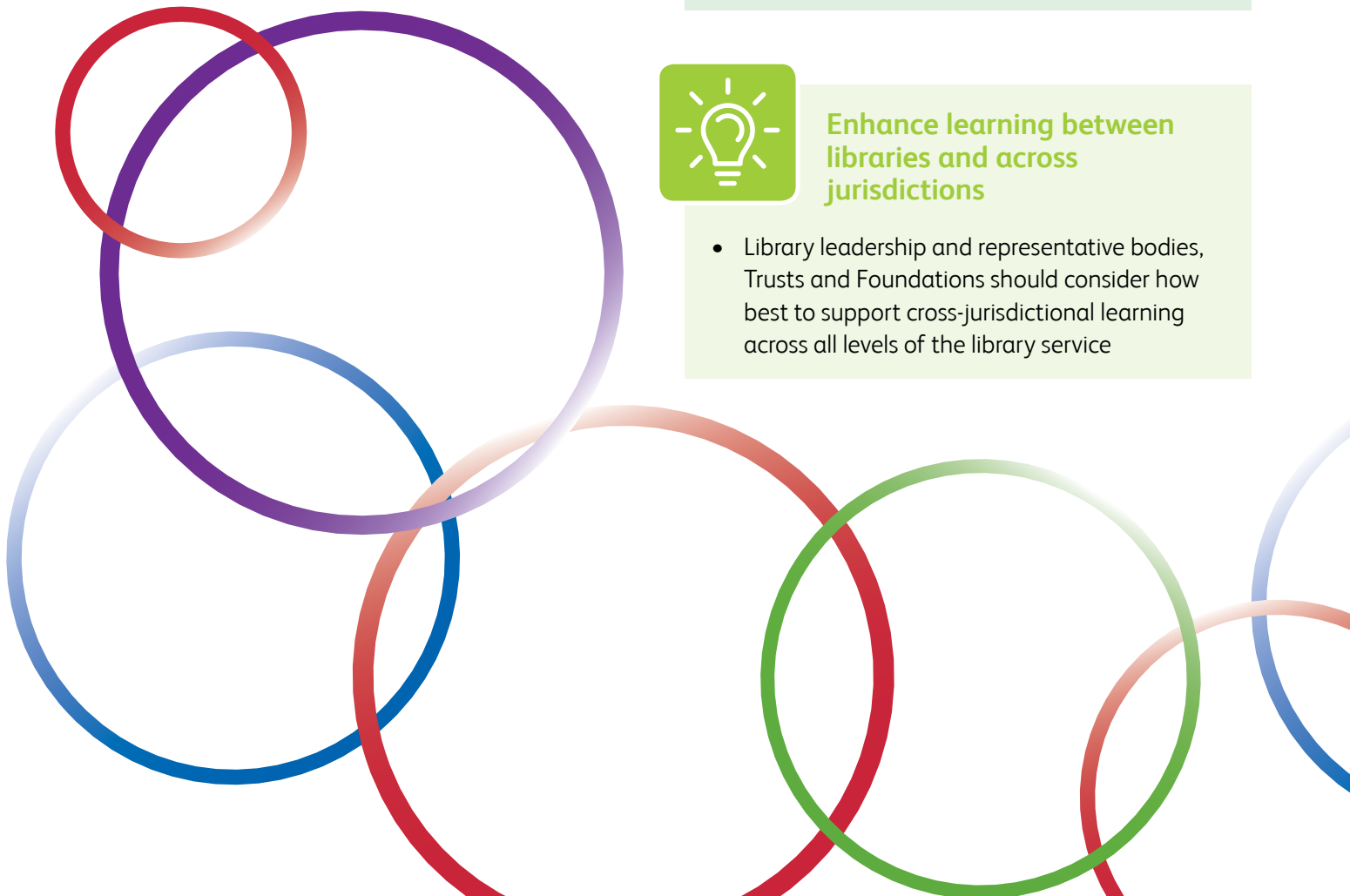
Invest in value-based innovation, leadership and outcomes-based partnerships

- Library services to reaffirm and embed core values
- Library services to explore ways of cultivating innovative ideas within the service and in conversation with organisations outside the sector
- Library services to inculcate a culture where learning, innovation and challenge is rewarded
- Library leadership, representative bodies and local authorities should consider how they can continue to support the development of leadership and innovation across all tiers of the public library workforce
- Local and national governments and voluntary organisations to explore the value of partnering with public libraries to deliver services and outcomes
- Trusts, foundations and governments to provide investment to support leadership and innovation



Enhance learning between libraries and across jurisdictions

- Library leadership and representative bodies, Trusts and Foundations should consider how best to support cross-jurisdictional learning across all levels of the library service



Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35707956> [Accessed November 2016]
- 2 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35707956> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-35707956> [Accessed November 2016]
- 3 50 new libraries have opened 2011-2016 and there has been considerable press attention on the refurbishment and opening of Manchester, Liverpool and Exeter central libraries.
- 4 There has also been growing diversification in the management and governance of library services, including arms-length trusts, social enterprises, staff mutual and community managed libraries, and an increasing number of co-located library services.
- 5 There has been a 330% increase in the number of coding clubs run in public libraries between March 2016 and November 2016 (<http://goscl.com/coding-clubs-in-libraries-on-the-rise-330-increase-from-march-2016/> [Accessed November 2016]); the Good Things Foundation and others have been working with libraries to deliver digital inclusion projects; the first library-based digital fabrication lab opened in the UK in 2014; library hacks have been run; and there is an emerging interest in the role public libraries can play in supporting citizens to better understand and navigate data privacy issues.
- 6 Access the following links to see a range of the services and activities that public libraries provide as:
 - economic enabler <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/library-as-economic-enabler/>
 - learning hub <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/library-as-learning-hub/>
 - social hub <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/library-as-social-hub/>
 - cultural centre <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/library-as-cultural-centre/>
- 7 Searching for and reserving books online became a universal service in Ireland as of March 2017.
- 8 In England, 48% of people said it would encourage them to use the library and this figure was 59% in Ireland, 45% in Northern Ireland, 47% in Scotland and 42% in Wales.
- 9 Ranking based on absolute percentages: England 54%, Ireland 67% and Wales 52%.
- 10 Excluding books that are read for paid work or academic study.
- 11 Logistic regression was carried out to identify factors are predictors of 1) the likelihood of respondents having used a library in the past 12 months and 2) the likelihood of respondents having used the library frequently in the past 12 months. This form of analysis controls for the effects of different factors. The following demographic factors were included in regression analysis: gender; whether there were children in the household or not; age; working status; readership; and socio-economic class.
- 12 Northern Ireland presented a mixed picture in terms of increases and decreases in support for specific changes, while Scotland was the only jurisdiction to see a decline in the proportion of people who would be encouraged to use the library should the suggested improvements and changes be made.
- 13 For example CILIP

**Andrew Carnegie House
Pittencrieff Street
Dunfermline
KY12 8AW**

**Tel: +44 (0)1383 721445
Fax: +44 (0)1383 749799
Email: info@carnegieuk.org
www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk**

This report was written by Dr Jenny Peachey, Senior Policy Officer
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