

Leanne Bellot

Head of Libraries & Archives

Digital inclusion across the sector

Libraries have been recognised as being key community assets that can help bridge the digital divide. By providing access to equipment and fostering strong partnerships, libraries are well placed to provide a range of opportunities to address digital isolation. We have seen a digital shift and a real need emerge across communities throughout the sector. There is a real drive to highlight the work of libraries across the country in this area and to garner more recognition and support for the lives being transformed.



Cross sector working

- Digital Inclusion Plan 2025
- Digital Inclusion in Libraries: Framework and Practice notes
- IT Reuse for Good charter

Changing sector behaviours

- Advocacy for Digital Inclusion within libraries
- Health and Digital literacy
- Universal Offers

Examples of funding opportunities

- LibraryOn
- Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund

Pilot initiatives across other libraries

- Digital Learning Stations: Midlothian libraries
- Inclusive Digital Zones: Barking and Dagenham
- Digital Spaces in Libraries: The Space and Arts Council

Katrina Palmer

Digital & Performance Lead

Bi-Borough Libraries & Archives

Core Offer



Digital and Technology

This supports Our Purpose to help people to Read, Learn and Connect by promoting digital inclusion through gaining confidence with digital skills, using technology, accessing and using online information, and staying safe online.

Every library will have:

- Self-service technology for loan, renewal and return of items
- 24/7 access to library e-resources and help using the library catalogue.
- Free access to public computers, internet, Wi-Fi and scanners for library members.
- Paid printing and scanning facilities.
- Knowledgeable staff with digital skills to assist customers who do not normally access information or services online and dedicated IT sessions available in libraries.
- Help for people to feel safe online.
- Support for customers to access digital council services to enable channel shift

Information and
Learning

Reading and
Literacy

Health and
Wellbeing

Culture and
Creativity

Children and
Young People

Transformation Principles and Strategic Action Plan



The Bi-Borough Libraries and Archives transformation principles were co-designed with senior officers and lead members in May 2024 to create a shared vision and clear steps forward. These principles will guide service developments for the next two years, overseen by the Transformation Board.

The Strategic Action Plan brings these principles to life, setting the direction for the service. It was shaped by over 200 ideas and feedback from communities, partners, colleagues, and staff.

Connected

- Integration and collaboration with existing services
 - Enhanced localised partnerships
- Utilisation of data and insights across services to inform service development

Future Proofed and Sustainable

- Clear social and financial value
- Increased commercialisation and marketing
 - Maximise use of existing assets and resources
- Environmentally sustainable, reduced carbon footprint

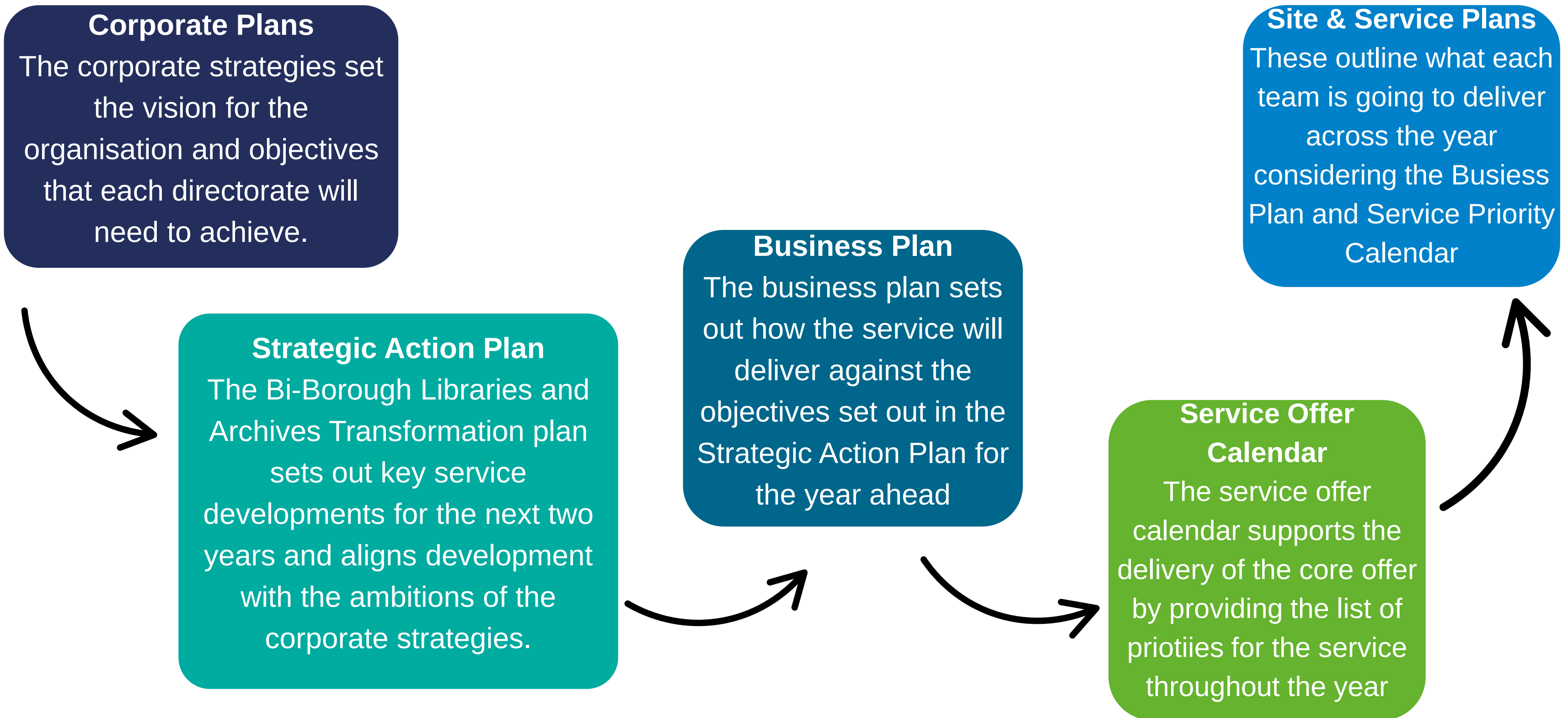
Has flexible and engaging spaces

- Community Hubs
- Co-located services
 - Access buildings
- Fun, interactive, immersive and flexible
- Increased visibility of the wider offer

Co-developed with and for the community

- Co-creation and partnership
- Strong sense of ownership from the community
 - Inclusive and equitable
 - Enhanced virtual offer

How does it all fit together?



Business Plan 25/26



Transformation Principle: Flexible and Engaging Service

Objective: Extend digital library services activities, continuing to reduce digital exclusion and isolation through targeted local work

Deliverables:

- Review the existing digital offer (online resources and digital inclusion) for Libraries & Archives to shape it, which re-imagines how we talk about and promote it
- Secure funding for and implement additional physical and virtual tools to increase digital accessibility and ensure consistency
- Develop a pathway between DI teams and Home Library Service to ensure our most excluded residents are targeted with regards to digital inclusion

Outcomes:

- Increase in the number of attendees at digital inclusion activities
 - Increased awareness of the digital library services provision
- Increase in the number of HLS customers engaging with digital inclusion campaigns

Future Strategy 2027-2032

- Developing a new Libraries & Archives Service strategy for 2027–2032 to guide all service development.
- Ensuring alignment with Westminster’s and RBKC’s strategic priorities and sector trends.
- Conducting comprehensive research across both councils and the wider sector.
- Creating a robust community engagement plan, with formal approval set for October.
- Plan will use various engagement methods to ensure community voices shape the new strategy.

Emily Gallagher

Bi-borough Digital Library

Services Manager

Extend our digital library services, continuing to reduce digital exclusion

Unite Digital Services and Digital Inclusion; acknowledging that upskilling residents by giving them **help** with and **access** to digital is essential in developing our digital **library** offer, as well opening the door to the digital world itself.

Digital inclusion and services



Digital help



Digital access



Digital library

Get involved

Digital Help

A programme that encourages residents to reap the benefits of the digital world by learning online basics such as emailing, internet browsing and beyond.

Digital Help offered in 14 of our 20 libraries

- IT Help Sessions by trained residents volunteers
- Digital Clinics or ITea Parties with Age UK
- Digital Ambassador 121 Sessions by corporately trained volunteers (WCC)

We also run a wider programme of adult learning courses in RBKC, sometimes on digital subjects, coding clubs for children and WAES digital courses in WCC, the Families and Communities Employment Service (RBKC) and Public Health in libraries, however attendees are not always digitally excluded, or don't enroll through library channels.

Digital Help: data snapshot

Digital Help	Digital Volunteer Hours per year	Average Reach per year
RBKC: 7 volunteers / 9 regular sessions	510	1,020
WCC: 20 volunteers / 20 regular sessions	1,478	3,864

Digital Help (RBKC)

Brompton

IT Help Session on [Thursdays, weekly, 1-3pm](#)

Chelsea

IT Help Session on [Tuesdays, weekly, 2-3pm](#)

Digital Clinic with Age UK on last [Thursday, monthly, 10am-12pm](#)

Kensington Central Library

IT Help Session on [Tuesdays, weekly, 10am-11.30am](#)

Digital Clinic with Age UK on [third Thursday, monthly, 2-4pm](#)

North Kensington

IT Help Session on [Tuesdays, weekly, 10am-12pm and NEW 5.30-7.30pm](#)

Digital Clinic with Age UK on last [Friday, monthly, 2-4pm](#)

Digital Help (WCC)

Sessions at:

Church Street,
Maida Vale, Marylebone, Mayfair,
Paddington, Pimlico,
Queen's Park, St John's Wood
Victoria

Digital Access

“Digital inclusion takes a village” - Good Things Foundation

- Hearing loops
- Microsoft accessibility features on public PCs including the magnifier app to see words and images better
- Physical access information on websites
- WelcoMe app (WCC) allows customers to tell us access needs in advance

Good Things Foundation Hubs provide free data usage, signpost residents to as Learn My Way platform; a step-by-step way to get online. Sites:
Kensington Central, Charing Cross, Church Street, Maida Vale, Marylebone, Mayfair, Paddington, Saint John’s Wood, or Victoria

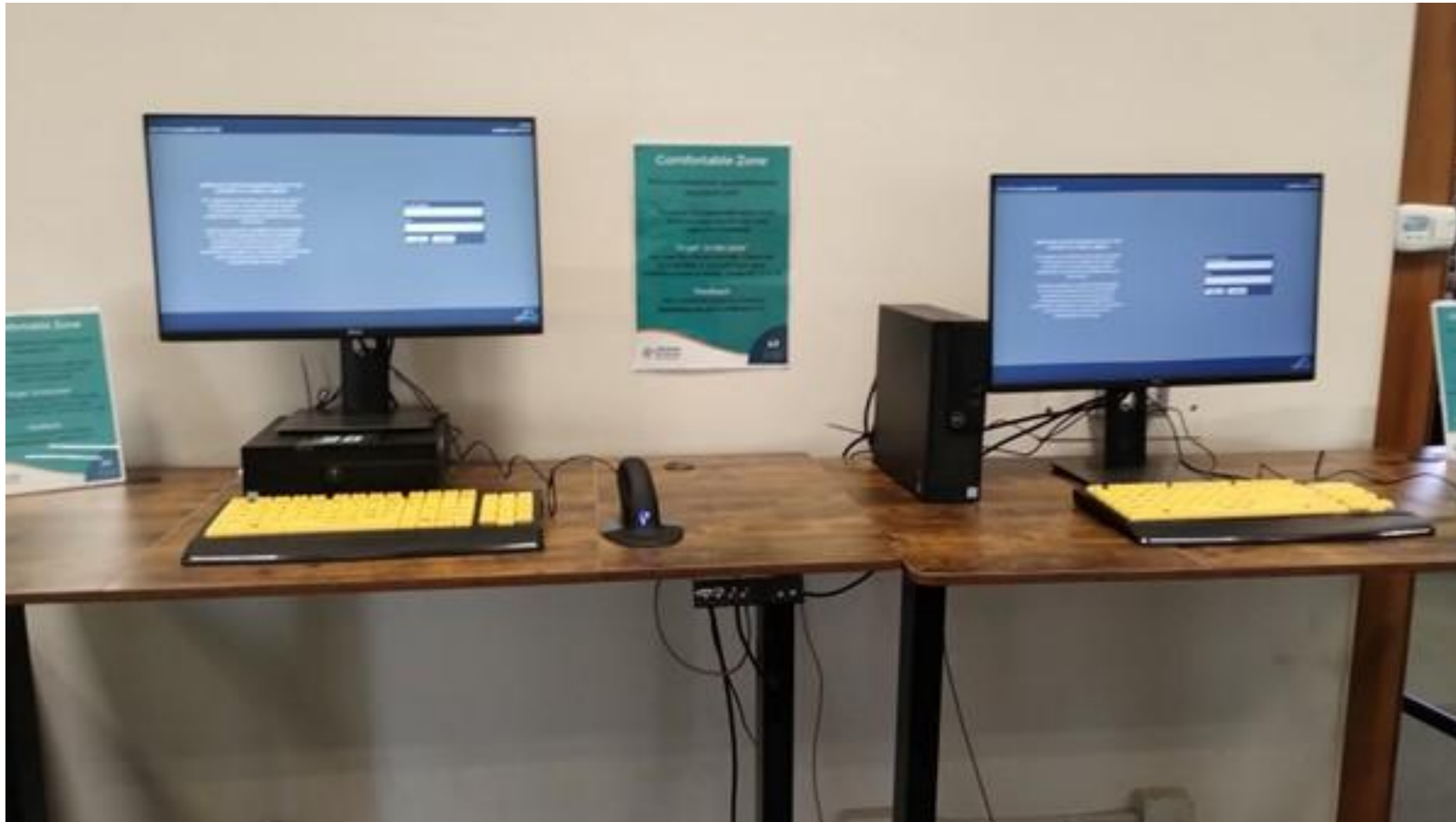
- Corporate-led Digital Inclusion helplines, device giveaways and device recycling
- Welcoming neurodiversity with quiet hours

And not forgetting:

Home Library Service

Comfortable Zone at Kensington Central for library members (planning to extend)

Free bookable area with desktop computers ready for use. The zone is wheelchair accessible with electric, height adjustable desks, equipped with ambidextrous mice for ease, and arranged with large print keyboards.



Digital Library



The Digital Library is the way you can engage with our online resources, most often without having to visit us in-person. All you need is a library membership and internet access, plus a curiosity to step into our virtual world.

The Digital Library comprises enriching online resources that cater for eclectic tastes, interests and topics from family history to alternative music streaming. As well as apps to access an e-library of books, audio and more.

- **Most popular:** Ancestry, Borrowbox, FindMyPast, Libby, Lida-Europe, Pressreader, and Times Digital Archive
- **Business**
- **Culture and creativity Art**
- **E-library**
- **Education and language**
- **History**

And don't forget about the other ways you can engage with libraries online

- [Libraries' monthly newsletter and podcast](#)
- [Events, some of which are online](#)
- Library Tours (coming soon - WCC)

Data services: data snapshot

Most popular digital services	Average reach
Pressreader Libby Ancestry FindMyPast Borrowbox Digital Times Archive	12,000 users per year

Get involved

- Volunteer as a Digital Helper. We are always looking for residents to help run our IT Help Sessions in libraries. [Learn more](#).
- Celebrate online awareness with us at national events like Get Online Week and Silver Sunday in October, or Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD) in May. Our programmes include displays, activities, and special events to encourage online learning. [Find out what's on and come along](#).
- Partner with us and contribute your digital expertise or services as an individual, organisation or charity. If you have an idea or can progress our residents' online learning journey in Libraries and Archives, approach your local library or email LibrariesDigitalEngagement@rbkc.gov.uk ✉.



Get Online

Pop-in to our digital pop-ups for Get Online Week
20-26 October 2025

Get online and thrive with a **series of pop-ups across libraries** to improve your digital skills.

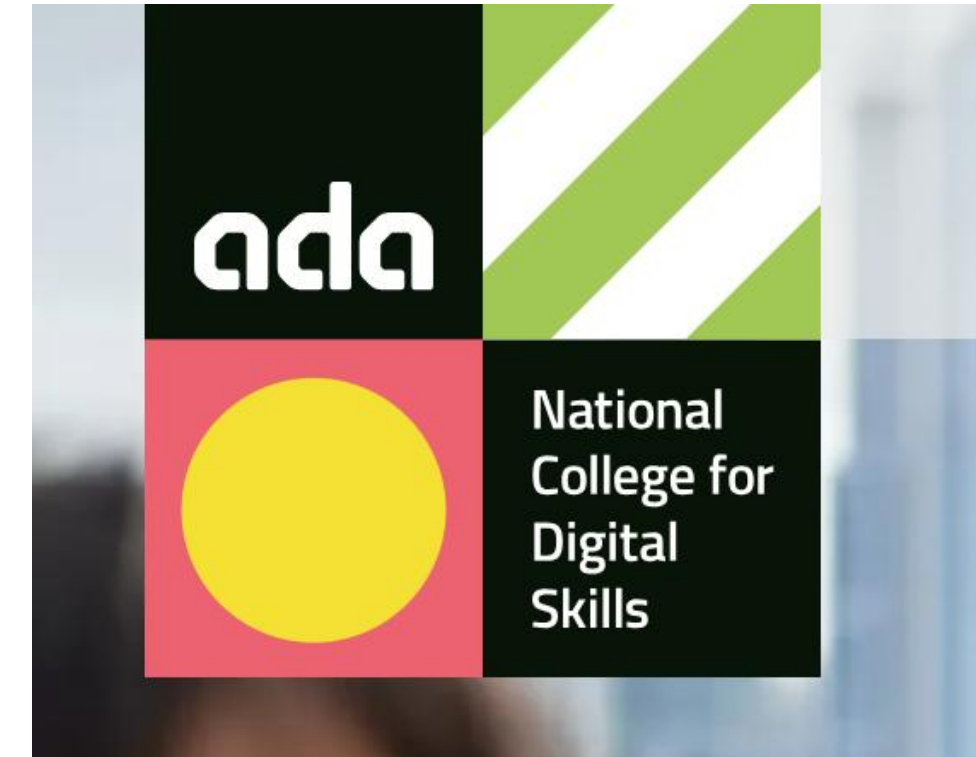


- Need help with **web accounts?**
- **Email, don't have one?** Get set up.

Sign in

To find out more speak to our staff.

GOW partnerships so far...



DigitALL project

Mahbuba Khan

Community and Outreach

Manager

A Bi-borough Home Library Service



What is the Home Library Service & who is it for?

A tailor-made delivery service for people who cannot go to a physical library. The service is open to housebound residents of Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster.

- Carer
- Person with disabilities
- Older or elderly person with mobility issues

They can also apply on a temporary basis if they live in the boroughs and are:

- Recovering from an accident and are temporarily immobile
- Looking after someone which makes leaving the house difficult
- Finding it difficult during the winter months to get out and about

We want to work with you



Strengthening Collaboration with Networks by:

- **Increasing Referrals** - more referrals to the Home Library Service
- **Visibility in Communications** - Feature us in newsletters etc.
- **Event Participation** – Attend community events and meetings
- **Extend Service Reach** - Supply stock to you (in waiting areas etc.)

Where do we currently deliver?

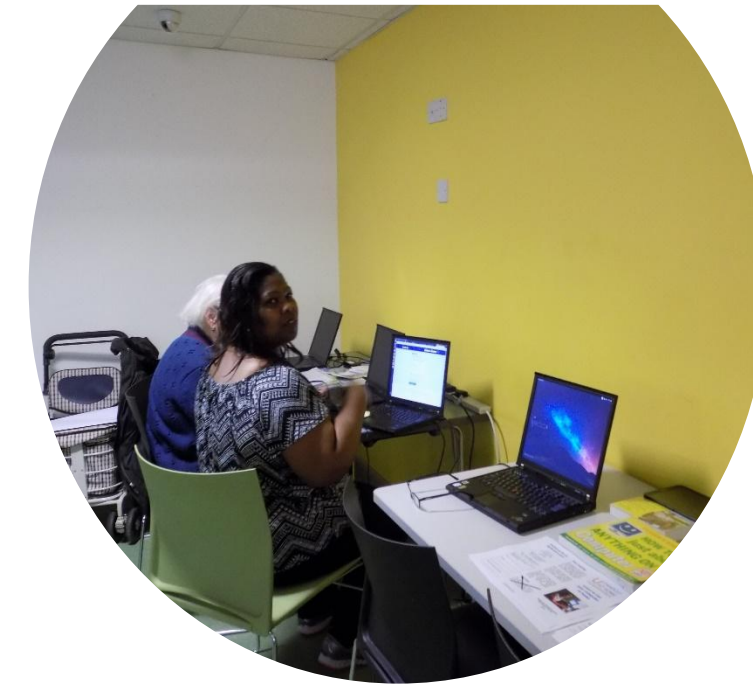
We deliver to:

- Individual's home
- Care/Nursing homes
- Hospices & Hospitals
- Religious Institutions
- Community Centres
- Sheltered Housing



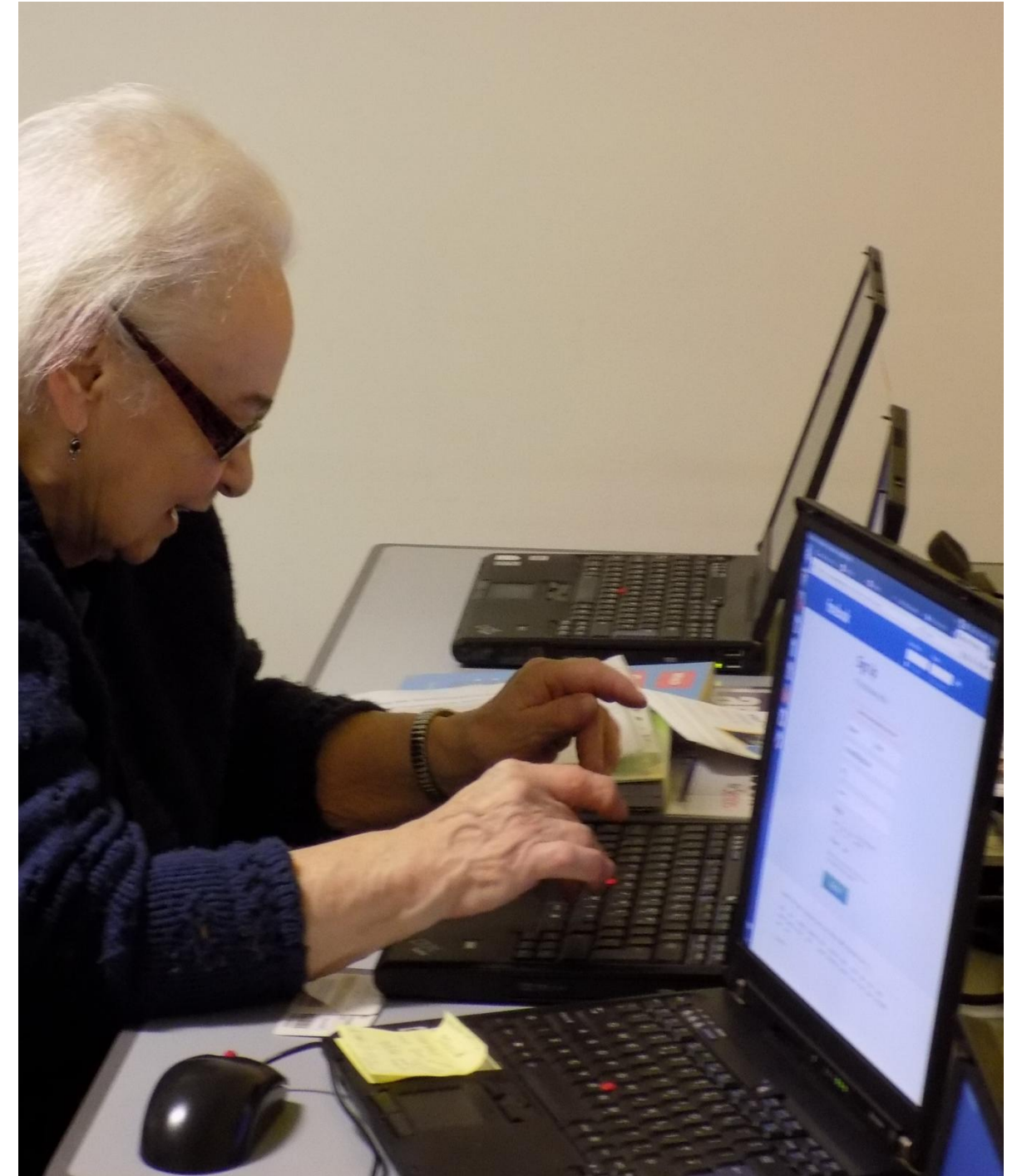
What other services do we want to provide?

- Disseminate information to members about range of events such as Silver Sunday, Health & Wellbeing, Fall Prevention etc.
- To reduce the digital exclusion gaps, both HLS teams have worked with council Digital Inclusion Teams to provide Samsung Tablets to residents
RBKC HLS: 2 laptops, 20 Samsung Tablets & 25 SIM cards
WCC HLS: 26 Samsung Tablets and 8 SIM cards
- Would like to work to more closely with Digital Inclusion Teams to provide connectivity and devices to bridge the digital divide
- Assist members with one-to-one digital help at home/libraries
- Invite & transport housebound members to attend organised Tea Parties and Comedy events for example.
- Increase referral to and from other services



Who do we serve?

- **Active Members**
RBKC HLS: 99
Westminster HLS: 155
- **Visits & Items Issued**
RBKC: 1,503 visits → 24,639 items
Westminster: 2,813 visits → 22,829 items
- **Visit Frequency**
RBKCHLS: Every 4 weeks
Westminster HLS: Every 3 weeks
- **New Member Onboarding**
Assessment visit to discuss preferences & needs
All enquiries handled efficiently by professional staff
- **Free Resources Provided**
Ordinary & large print books
Audiobooks & spoken word
Music CDs, DVDs, magazines





The best kept secret of HLS

There are no fines for overdue items!

How to refer or to request a service?



Kensington & Chelsea Home Library Service

C/O Kensington Central Library, 12 Phillimore Walk, London W8 7RX

Phone: 020 7341 0721

Email: hls@rbkc.gov.uk

WWW: rbkc.gov.uk

Westminster Home Library Service

C/O Maida Vale Library, Sutherland Avenue, London, W9 2EH

Phone: 020 7641 5405

Email: homelibraryservice@westminster.gov.uk

www: Westminster.gov.uk

Or by completing this MS Form: <https://forms.office.com/e/LxUiKtw7j4>

Ways to support



1. **Receive** information to share with your networks about Home Library Service by filling in [this MS Form](#).
2. **Partner** with us for Get Online Week and beyond. We are always looking for Digital Help volunteer partnerships and opportunities to grow our programme.
3. **Share** our Digital Help ([RBKC](#) / [WCC](#)) and Get Online Week programme

Reach out to:

emily.gallagher@rbkc.gov.uk – Library Digital Services and Inclusion
mkhan1@westminster.gov.uk – Home Library Service

Thank you



As well as any questions, it would be wonderful to hear your thoughts on we can strengthen our collaborations?