

Libraries for the children of Bath and North East Somerset: survey for parents and carers of 0-11 year olds

Research findings

What did we do?

We asked parents and carers of children aged 0-11 to tell us about their visits to our libraries and similar destinations, what might encourage them to use our libraries and whether our services had helped with reading ability.

What was it for?

This survey builds on the findings of the Spring 2022 Libraries, Information & Advice Centres survey, probing more into how we can develop our offer to young children.

We set out to understand what encourages parents and carers to take young children to settings including libraries and what library services might offer to encourage further use. We will analyse these alongside the findings of the Spring 2022 11–18-year-olds research, so that we can try and better understand the changes in library engagement as children get older.

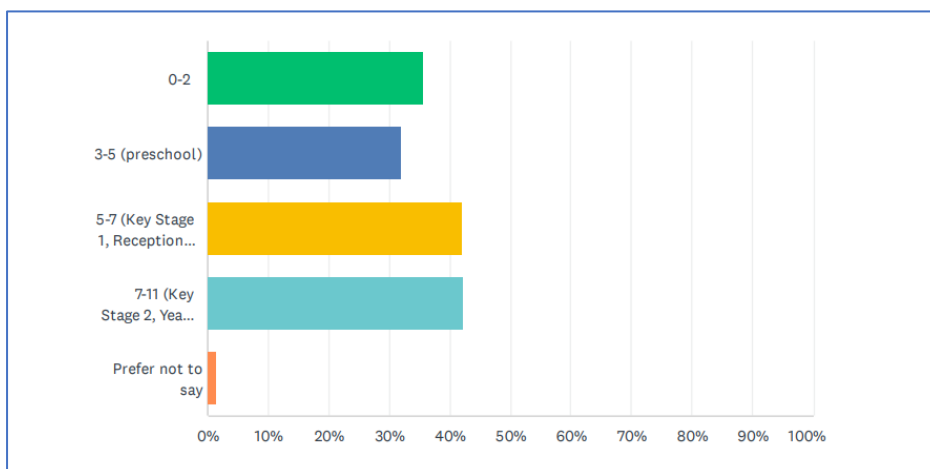
Who took part?

893 parents and carers completed our survey. Anyone with a caring capacity for younger children was encouraged to participate, including childminders and family members.

49% of respondents use Bath Central Library, **20%** Keynsham and **14%** Midsomer Norton Library. We also asked who used Community Run Libraries (**19%**), the Mobile Library (**6%**) and other locations and activities including paid classes and Childrens Centres.

Survey responses show a fairly even spread across the age ranges of children.

If visiting a library, what age are the children you would accompany?



Around **3%** of all responses related to children receiving Pupil Premium funding and just under **6%** of responses were from people who do not use our services.

What have we learned?

We have three core libraries plus a mobile library. Broadly speaking, we have learnt that respondents want the same things across our core locations. We know that a welcoming environment is important, as is an offer which is free and local. This is the same for nonusers as well as respondents who are already active users of our services.

Have our services helped your children's ability to read?

624 respondents say that the libraries have helped their children with their reading. There were **530** free text responses when asked 'If you use our libraries, do you feel that our services have helped your children's ability to read?'. These have given us a lot of constructive feedback about what we could do better but also what we do well.

Many free text comments are about the choice and the variation of books that libraries enable children to access. The cost of books and the access to a vast free book borrowing service is mentioned numerous times.

As a public library service, there is no cost for joining the library or borrowing books. We are part of the Libraries West consortium which gives access to a wide range of books and digital resources too.

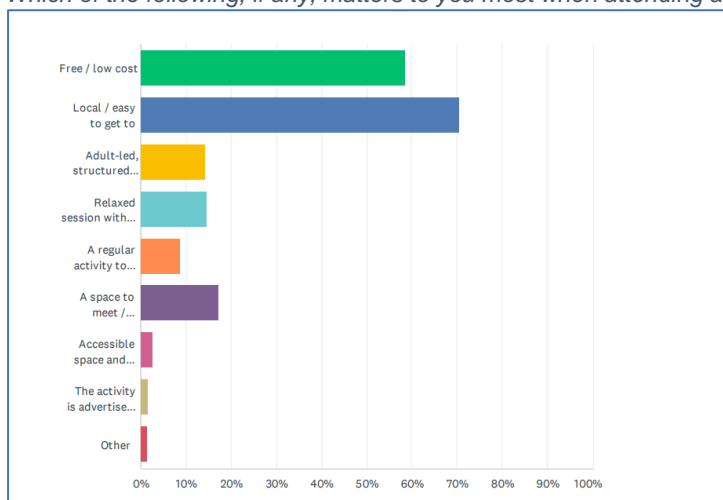
How you find out about children's activities or places to visit?

You told us that you largely use social media (**57%**), library website or social media (**45%**), childcare and education settings (**33%**) to find out about events and activities and although you do use notice boards, local websites etc this is less so. This was broadly the same for nonusers, although unsurprisingly they use our library website and social media much less. This information helps us to know where to promote events and library news to families.

What matters most when attending an activity with children?

There were lots of options to choose from, but location came out as the most important factor with **71%** of responses for being local or easy to get to (**70%** for nonusers). Low cost or free activities follow at **59%** for users. This is less important to nonusers at **39%**.

Which of the following, if any, matters to you most when attending an activity with your children?



Which facilities do you look for when visiting somewhere like a library or other attraction with your children?

When asked what facilities respondents look for when visiting somewhere like a library or other attraction with children, **81%** selected a welcoming children's area (**69%** for nonusers).

57% selected availability of resources including books and toys (**46%** for nonusers), followed by **50%** with access to toilet and baby change facilities (**46%** for nonusers). You provided over **70** detailed free text responses to this question which will be reviewed by our teams.

What might encourage parents and carers to bring children to the libraries?

You told us children's activities in the school holidays (**75%** for users and **54%** for nonusers), interactive storytelling (**61%** for users and **60%** for nonusers), reading age book recommendations (**54%** for users and **46%** for nonusers) and workshops for children (**50%** for users and **37%** for nonusers) were the most likely to encourage this.

You can find out more about what we offer on our [website](#) and keep up to date with news and events from the libraries by following us on [social media](#) or reading our [blog](#).

Next steps

All the information parents and carers have shared with us will be important in the decisions we make over the next year or two. In the short term they'll feed into our priority areas:

Bath Central Library refurbishment – comments and suggestions will be included in this project, and there'll be more opportunities for you to make suggestions once the project is underway.

Activities and events – we're continuing to increase the number of activities and events we offer, and your comments and suggestions will help us focus on the things children and their carers most want.

Information and promotion – we'll work to make sure parents and carers; partners and education settings know what we're doing and how to join in.

Developing our spaces after lockdown – we've already made a lot of changes to make our spaces more welcoming again after the restrictions of the last two years and with the Warm Welcome into our libraries this Winter.

Book stock – all the stock related findings will be shared with our stock team, who work to ensure that our collections are working for our residents. We take book suggestions from our users, and these do inform what we purchase and which library it is available in.