Poverty Proofing© Libraries

Library service expression of interest

A pioneering new Arts Council England-funded project will help libraries become more welcoming to families experiencing poverty.

The project is a partnership between Libraries Connected, the membership body for public libraries, and charity Children North-East, whose unique Poverty Proofing© methodology will be used to identify barriers preventing low-income families from accessing the full range of services that libraries provide.

Funded by a grant of £49,770 from Arts Council England, Children North East will carry out a full Poverty Proofing© audit of libraries in three English local authorities. The process will involve talking to staff and library users as well as in-depth discussions with people affected by poverty who don’t currently use the libraries, including “mystery shopper” visits.

This new qualitative research will be combined with existing evidence to develop a series of bespoke recommendations that will help the libraries to improve access, participation, experience and long-term engagement for low-income families.

Each participating library service will receive an in-depth report and information will be used to develop a framework that all libraries can use to reflect on their own practice and also may lead to further poverty proofing projects.

Gateshead Libraries are the first service to participate and we are now seeking two more services to take part in the project which concludes in early 2026. We will be seeking a geographic and demographic spread of services as well as different types of library service to be as representative as possible.

There is no financial commitment from the service, but you do need to commit to enabling staff to take part in training (delivered by Children North-East at a venue of your choice) and supporting the researchers as they conduct community consultation.

If you would be interested in taking part, please complete the Expression of Interest below

Your Library Service Click or tap here to enter text.

Your Name Click or tap here to enter text.

Your role Click or tap here to enter text.

Please confirm you have head of service authorisation[ ]

Please explain in no more than 250 words why your service should take part in the project. (It will help if you explain how you will respond to recommendations and your commitment to sharing new practices).

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please complete and send to Sarah.mears@librariesconnected.org.uk, with a subject heading ‘Poverty’ by 23/12/2024