

Invitation to Tender:

Impact and evaluation of activities to support older people and mental health in public libraries in the South East of England

1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries Connected is coordinating a project to measure the cost benefits to a Local Authority of activities in public libraries in the South East Region. There are many topics this could cover but the focus of this study is in relation to supporting older people and supporting the mental health in people of all ages, these topic areas feel timely to focus on given the increased demand for these services and the necessary focus of local authority spending these require

This tender is seeking a research specialist to help measure, manage and evidence the impact of activities in libraries that support older people keep healthy and well, and all age groups have improved mental health/wellbeing outcomes; in particular, how these forms of support then prevent, avoid or delay costs in more acute or specialist public services for these groups. The following details are outlined in this document:

- The service to be provided
- The information to be provided by tenderers
- The terms of business relation to the award of any contract
- Anticipated timetable for the programme
- Stated outcomes and expectations of the work

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 About Us – Libraries Connected

Libraries Connected is a charity partly funded by Arts Council England as the Sector Support Organisation for public libraries. We are also proud to remain a membership organisation, made up of every library service in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Crown Dependencies.

Our vision is an inclusive, modern, sustainable, and high-quality public library service at the heart of every community in the UK. We work to promote the value of libraries; broker national partnerships share best practice and drive innovation in the sector.

We:

- Represent the public library sector to communicate the value of libraries
- Connect partners to local libraries by brokering national relationships with a wide range of organisations and individuals
- Improve library services by developing and sharing best practice, providing training for library staff, and facilitating a network of library leaders in the UK
- Drive innovation and new thinking on the role of libraries in a modern society.

2.2 About Us – Libraries Connected South East

Libraries Connected South East is the regional grouping of the following library services:

- Bracknell Forest
- Brighton & Hove
- Buckinghamshire
- East Sussex
- Guernsey
- Hampshire
- Isle of White
- Jersey
- Kent
- Medway
- Milton Keynes
- Oxfordshire
- Portsmouth
- Reading
- Slough
- Southampton
- Surrey
- West Berkshire
- West Sussex
- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
- Wokingham

All services are directly delivered by Local Authorities, with a mix of larger county councils and smaller unitary authorities. The region includes the autonomous Channel Island crown dependencies. Together they serve a regional population of 9.6 million people.

For the purposes of this tender, the group is working together to commission the work, contribute to the research and assess the outputs. Several of the group have contributed financially to the project.

2.3 An existing study by University of East Anglia

In 2023 the Libraries Connected East of England region published *Libraries for living, and for living better: the value and impact of public libraries in the East of England region*. The report was the culmination of research and field work undertaken in a sample of libraries within the region, looking specifically at activity relating to digital inclusion, health, wellbeing and independent living, and children's literacy. The research found the estimated value of public libraries nationally to be at least £3.4bn annually, with a six-fold return on investment, with each branch library typically providing £1 million value for its local community.

See Appendix 1 for the UEA report 'Libraries for Living and For Living Better'

3. DELIVERABLES

We are seeking to work with an organisation(s) or individual that can provide a credible, replicable and recognisable methodology to undertake research and field work to produce evidence and analysis that responds to our research problem; what is the value of library activities and services in relation to support for older people, and support for the mental health of people of all ages. The evidence should be presented in a final report that is able to articulate the value of public libraries in the context of wider Local Authority priorities and pressures in relation to older people and people needing support for their mental health.

The aim is to achieve a report that can be used with specific partners and stakeholders, funding bodies and commissioners working in the local area, for example, demonstrating the ways in which public libraries provision tangibly affects the prevention or reduction of financial burden on intervention services such as those provided by the NHS, Adult Services or Public Health.

Libraries Connected South East will offer venues, access to activities and participants, and relevant practitioners in related services within the authority, for the collation and creation of primary data to inform the report.

Ideally, Tenderers should be able to evidence how the report will assist the evidence base for libraries wishing to pose a counterfactual outcome, i.e. that library engagement has affected a different / better outcome for the individual than would be the case if that provision were not available.

The ambition is to:

- Build upon the successful work completed by Libraries Connected East, published in the *Libraries for living, and for living better* report (2023)
- Establish a recommended methodology with credible measures; ideally designed and carried out in accordance with principles of HM Treasury guidance; [The Magenta Book](#) and [The Green Book](#)
- Create a modular design that would provide a transferable and replicable framework – potentially in the form of a toolkit – that makes this a sustainable and adaptable piece of work for the public libraries sector for the future.
- Articulate a return on investment, providing an economic value of library activity in terms of direct benefit to recipients but also avoided or delayed costs to other services which library services can use to articulate the value of their service in their own local authorities and wider.
- Provide a monetised assessment of impacts that can inform a wider conversation with commissioners and or service providers.

3.1 Scope of the project / target audience

- **Older people:** the impact of providing activities, events and services for older people in libraries, especially cohorts not yet accessing adult social care and where library provision can be evidenced to have diverted or delayed demand for more costly health or social care services; the cost saving, or avoidance, should be evidenced through research and articulated in the final report
- **Mental Health/positive wellbeing support for all ages:** the impact of providing activities, events and services for people in need of mental health support, especially cohorts not yet accessing acute health services and where library provision can be evidenced to divert or delay demand for more costly health or social care services; the cost saving, or avoidance, should be evidenced through research and articulated in the final report

3.2 Assumptions

Libraries Connected partners will be fully engaged throughout the process. Specific library authorities (identified sample sizes to represent the region) will support in detail, attend any meetings required, providing suggested field work which can be undertaken through Spring/Summer 2025.

The project will move at pace and be agile in its approach. Tenderers will be willing to shape the work and deliver to time, attend meetings/discussions to develop and report progress, working with partners (including library customers) to ensure adequate evidence is gathered for a robust and reliable, published piece of work.

The partnership is collaborative in its approach to solutions and will share / publish the findings nationally for adapted use locally. Each service has contributed what it can afford and all services in the region and nationally should benefit from the work.

Tenderers will work across multiple authorities to gather evidence and complete research.

The project will work openly, in good faith, in confidence and with a shared purpose.

Tenderers and partners will work to minimise costs, value for money and maximise results.

Tenderers and partners will establish ethical principles to respect the nature of the work to be studied, especially the potential involvement of vulnerable groups or individuals.

4. OUTCOMES

- A published report identifying methodology, process, contributory partners, and financial assessments of engagement
- The ability for Libraries Connected and partners (including DCMS) to use the research in a full communications plan, including conference and webinar presentations
- The report will include details of the methodology in such a way that it could be replicated by other library services in assessing their own activities
- Report will highlight examples and case studies of library services and highlight positive outcomes these deliver including from direct customer feedback.

5. CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

The contract will be managed by Iain Moore, Commercial Director at Libraries Connected, and Russell Allen, project lead for Libraries Connected South East and Head of Libraries & Heritage, West Sussex County Council.

This project will report to Libraries Connected, through the Libraries Sector South East region.

6. WORKPLAN AND MILESTONES

We envisage the project will follow this workplan, but proposals can set out an alternative timetable to meet the deliverables.

Activity Time Period

- Tender issued; submissions reviewed; supplier appointed: October-December 2024
- Stakeholder engagement; research; fieldwork: January-September 2025
- Final report: October 2025

7. BUDGET

£40,000 including VAT and travel and expenses.

Whilst many of the stakeholder engagement meetings can be conducted virtually, there is an expectation that tenderers will visit on site to review in person events, in several of the library services in the south east region.

Library services will absorb localised costs such as catering, venue hire as part of an existing activity that is being observed as part of this work.

Travel, accommodation, sustenance, and any other reasonable costs incurred by the tenderers as part of project should be costed in the overall budget.

Libraries Connected will be able to provide some administrative support for engaging partners with the process.

8. PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS

8.1 Procurement timetable

Week commencing 4 November	Invitation to tender published
Friday 15 November	Deadline for questions from potential providers
By Wednesday 20 November	Responses to questions shared with potential providers
Friday 29 November	Deadline for final proposals from potential providers
Friday 13 December	Selection interviews with shortlisted providers
Week commencing 16 December	Appointment of preferred provider

8.2 Proposal content

The proposals should outline:

- Understanding of the project and deliverables
- Experience suited to the project subject and proposed methodology
- Names and experience of individuals assigned to the project, to clarify their involvement with each phase or unit of the work
- Costs, including breakdown for costs of each phase or unit of work, day rate of each team member and other costs or expenses.
- We also welcome any options/ideas/proposals or suggestions where the tenderer could build on this brief to further enhance the outcomes of this work

8.3 Proposal submission

Please email proposals to info@librariesconnected.org.uk by 5pm on Friday 29 November 2024.

8.4 Evaluation of proposals

We will evaluate proposals using these criteria:

CRITERIA	WEIGHTING
Extent to which proposal demonstrates and understanding of the brief and evidence of ability to deliver to timelines across multiple partners	25
Knowledge and experience relevant to the project, including an understanding of policies, strategies, and relevant literature within the scope of this work	25
Quality of methodology and experience in relation to development of strategy and programmes through a process of consultation	25
Proposed team composition and management	15
Cost	10

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

For an informal discussion about the work, please contact:

Iain Moore Iain.Moore@librariesconnected.org.uk

Commercial Director, Libraries Connected

Appendix I – Useful links to existing research, strategy or context

Care Quality Commission

[*The state of health care and adult social care in England 2023/24*](#)

Published: 25 October 2024

Centre for Mental Health

[*The economic and social costs of mental ill health*](#)

Published: March 2024

Faculty of Public Health

[*Prevention in Adult Social Care: venturing upstream - the route less travelled*](#)

Published: February 2022

HM Treasury

[The Magenta Book - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Published: March 2020

House of Lords Library

[*Local government finances: impact on communities*](#)

Published: 14 March 2024

Institute for Government

[*A preventative approach to public services: How the government can shift its focus and improve lives*](#)

Published: May 2024

Appendix II – Outline of potential field work

Activity	Description	Authority / Authorities
Activity groups (adults)	Hobby/special interest groups including knitting, crafting, board games, foreign language conversation	Across the region
Advice surgeries/drop-ins	Information, advice and guidance offers from various partner agencies, accessed in the library	Southampton (+ others)
Books Beyond Words	Reading group for adults with learning disabilities and their carers	Kent
Home Library service	Home delivery of books to people isolated or home bound, unable to visit a library in person	Across the region
Know Your Neighbourhood	Various library-based activities to promote volunteering and reduce loneliness	Kent
Melody for the Mind	Singing group for people living with dementia and their carers	West Sussex
Positive Ageing Month	Roadshow of events with multi-agency partners offering support to older people	West Sussex
Prison libraries	Events, activities and interventions to support prisoner wellbeing and rehabilitation	Kent, West Sussex (+ others)
Social groups	Variously branded groups with focus on social contact in a library setting	Across the region
Volunteering	Various roles supporting reading, digital access, children's activities or general branch work	Across the region