

SUPPLEMENT TO THE AGENDA FOR

General Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 27 September 2016

9.30 am

**Council Chamber, The Shire Hall, St Peter's Square, Hereford,
HR1 2HX**

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Libraries for Life

September 2016

Clare Llewellyn West (chair) and other members of
Joint Action for Herefordshire Libraries



Joint Action for
Herefordshire Libraries

Libraries for Life

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J AHL (Joint Action for Herefordshire Libraries) is an independent action group. Members are drawn from all the county library friends and users' organisations, and we aim to represent the needs of all library users across the county.

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Investing in Libraries for the Future

~ our manifesto ~

Public libraries – like the NHS - are a vital service backed by Act of Parliament. Wherever you live in the UK your local authority is bound by law to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service.

Public libraries are also an asset and investment. They are a lifeline at the heart of our communities - the safe place where people of all ages find information and advice, learning and leisure, companionship and activity, peace and reflection. They are a gateway to local services. They help job seekers find work. They support businesses, visitors, and those seeking help.

Since 2005, Herefordshire Council has slashed library opening hours by almost 40%. That's not all. In 2013, councillors seriously considered scrapping all libraries in the county except for Hereford library. The strength of opposition from local people and hard work behind the scenes by the library service stopped this and saved our libraries. A properly funded library service is vital to the health and wellbeing of our local communities, particularly in the current changing and challenging times. Libraries need to be supported and improved, not cut back or closed. If we work constructively as partners – county, town and parish councils, library professionals, library support groups, volunteers, education and health bodies – our library service can prosper.

Representing library users throughout the county, we call on Herefordshire Council to:

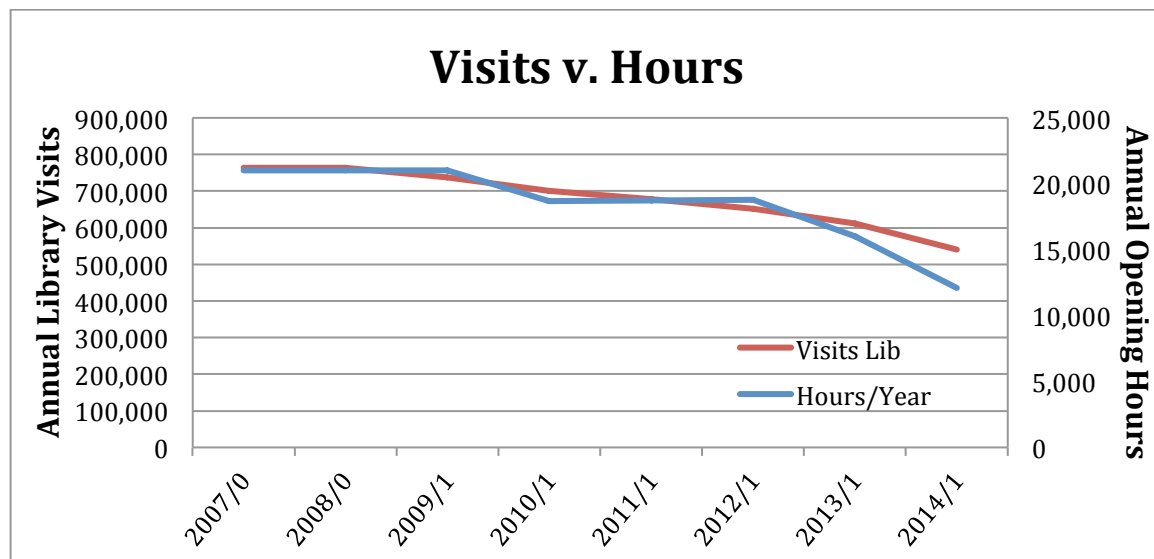
1. Recognise that the current network of libraries in our market towns and parishes is the minimum required to support our local communities and to give reasonable access to the service.
2. Invest in the current network to avoid isolating residents from access to services, learning and leisure.
3. Ensure that our library service has appropriate and sufficient professional staff, so that it can function effectively.
4. Allow the library professionals to make any decision to recruit and support volunteers, recognising that volunteers cannot be effective without the guidance of professional paid staff.
5. Support our libraries so that they can continue to develop as community hubs which can provide:
 - a range of activities and information to encourage health and well-being.
 - an economic contribution to their local communities.
 - provision of both face-to-face support and digital/online access to information and advice.
 - support for residents who need help accessing online services.
 - a key resource for the development of literacy and knowledge.

This report summarises our thinking about the service as it stands, the threats posed by the severe constraints on local authority spending, and the library service we believe the residents of Herefordshire deserve.

Where are we now?

The Big Picture

The 2014 overview of Herefordshire libraries¹ shows the county to have below average expenditure per 1000 population, a smaller number of libraries than comparable authorities, and less book stock. This suggests that even before the last round of cuts the service was being poorly supported by the authority. Library visits have dropped over the last decade but so have opening hours – by nearly 40%. Careful analysis of the relevant figures indicates that the drop in usage has followed the cut in hours, not vice versa. There has in fact been some recovery in visits per hour, especially where there has been investment and improvement as in the wonderful new library in the Ledbury Master's House.



The professional staff numbers have been steadily reduced. In Herefordshire 50% of staffing hours are provided by volunteers.² The remaining staff work extremely hard to maintain the professionally run libraries, the volunteer libraries and the extra services like community book schemes and the delivered service, plus income generating activities like the schools service and the internal courier service. However, there is an inevitable erosion, particularly on the front line, where the library visitor's chances of getting advice or guidance from a trained librarian are now minimal.

In a world where online access is increasingly the route to national and local services, the libraries have become a key resource in a whole new way. Those without the means or the skills to get online at home go to the library for access and support. Those who cannot carry out essential dealings with government or council departments because their broadband speed is insufficient, again head for the library.

¹ Herefordshire Libraries and market town CS Overview - Facts and Figures 2016 (final)

² ibid

There is also a serious question about the use of valuable civic resources. The fact that buildings like the superb modern library in Ross or the stunning, restored Master's House are only officially open four and a half days a week represents a false economy. Community groups can extend that usage and make the most of these iconic buildings. Although this would require some investment and support from the centre, such activity also offers opportunities for income generation.

A Rich Variety

Despite its small and scattered population and relatively small library service Herefordshire has an extraordinary variety of libraries and services. (see annexe) It can be said that, on a small scale, many of the options for library delivery have already been tested and tried locally. This rich source of experience shows that one size does not fit all. We have successful volunteer libraries like Leintwardine and Peterchurch. These are small libraries running with considerable professional back up from the library team and therefore without huge cost savings. We have the main market town libraries which carry much of the book stock for the county and provide a range of other services. This has the double benefit of creating multi service hubs (a "one stop shop" approach) and also making more economic use of the buildings. Hopefully in the not too distant future we will also have a central library worthy of a city with the culture and extraordinary heritage of Hereford.

The old mobile library service has been replaced by Delivered Services which currently supply about 160 housebound people and around 30 nursing/care homes. There are twelve community-run book schemes that operate from village halls, community centres and village shops, providing a focus for community activity. These are not linked to the library network, but are supported by the central library service team and get a regular exchange of library books on a six or eight week basis. Many contribute to a wider 'hub' in their communities, operating alongside village coffee mornings while contributing to the resilience and sustainability of village markets and shops.

Public Support

At every point in the service you will find supporters – regular users and occasional visitors, young Mums and elderly computer users, students and business people, volunteers, campaigners and fund raisers – all of whom recognise the value of a service which is delivered locally and provides access to culture, leisure, education, business information, local history, health advice and self-help. Some join our user groups – some just assume the library will always be there and are horrified when we tell them it is not so. All of them recognise this to be a really valuable and inclusive grass roots service.

Why do our libraries matter?

Herefordshire Council has defined four key priorities.

- 1. Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives**
- 2. Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life**
- 3. Support the growth of our economy**
- 4. Secure better services, quality of life and value for money**

Libraries provide a proven contribution to each of those priorities and so the protection and improvement of the library service is a direct contribution to local priorities.

Enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives

Libraries have always been sources of information – from the staff and from the stock. Whilst the face-to-face contact with trained librarians has sadly diminished and needs to be restored, other sources have increased. With more information being provided online, access to the internet has become more important. For many residents this is done via the library. This includes both direct and indirect health support and information, the very successful “Books on Prescription” and Shelf Help projects. Libraries encourage independence, self-development and social interaction. They are a safe place, open to all, providing service, welcome and support to people from every demographic and economic sector. They are the first source of help to many new arrivals in an area – whether tourists, new residents or migrant workers. Research indicates that people who use the library regularly tend to make less call on social care and health services.³

Keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life

Libraries are a “safe place” where children can begin to achieve some independence, develop creativity, and learn to interact with people from beyond the family circle. They are a priceless source to young families, allowing children to learn to love books and reading without the constraints of limited incomes. Research shows that children with the library habit do not suffer the skill drop during the school holidays which is common with their non reading peers. Literacy is a crucial skill providing the key foundation for education, and libraries foster that skill. They also allow children to develop their own tastes and interests outside the boundaries of increasingly tight school curricula. Teenagers use the library as a quiet place for homework, research and revision, a place to expand their cultural horizons and a source of self-help books at times when asking for help seems quite impossible.

Support the growth of our economy,

The Council’s own figures⁴ show Herefordshire to be a low wage, high working hours economy, with a higher than average number of small businesses (those with fewer than 10 employees). There are also issues around employment deprivation and adult skills. Many businesses, especially but not exclusively agricultural ones, have

³ The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

⁴ <https://factsandfigures.herefordshire.gov.uk>

geographic barriers to services – including online services. For any business which has broadband speed issues or a temporary loss of internet facilities the library becomes a second office –whether to fill in the DEFRA forms, contact clients, seek new staff or explore new ideas. The library gives access to research and reference materials which most small businesses or individuals cannot afford in house. For the unskilled the library may well be the starting point to self-improvement, and for the unemployed it is now vital for online jobsearch. There is also emerging evidence that the presence of public services in working areas supports and encourages local businesses:

“high streets ... have played a key role in ensuring access to important services such as health, education, transport, and culture for residents living around the high street and the wider area, especially for groups such as the elderly, the young and those on lower incomes, who generally find it more difficult to access services by private car. In areas where these services have been removed from the high street the consequences have been hugely damaging to the community cohesion of these areas.

With a growing but ageing population and increasing inequalities facing Britons, access to public services is as critical as ever. However, with such provision being threatened by public sector cuts and the issue of the decline of the high street as a place for public service provision persisting, the very foundations on which to build a vibrant high street for the future are at risk.”⁵

An independent report for Scottish Libraries⁶ found that the users of libraries place the following values on library services per visit: £24.10 in Scotland; £26.38 in Wales; and £27.27 in Northern Ireland. This theoretical monetary value is estimated via the amount users invest in using the services through their time and what they spend in the locality. When compared to the expenditure on library services, the user estimated value per visit of our survey respondents is over 6 times greater than the cost of provision in Northern Ireland, over 5.5 greater in Scotland and over 7.5 times greater in Wales. The operation of the library facilities also supports employment and supply chains locally. This results from the consumption spending of library employees (from their wages) and creating profits for the suppliers of goods and services to the libraries. These effects ‘multiply’ through the economy as the suppliers pay staff wages who then go on to spend in the locality. This research estimates that in 2012-13 the libraries supported 1,296 jobs in Scotland, 596 jobs in Wales and 327 in jobs in Northern Ireland **over and above** those directly employed by the service.

Secure better services, quality of life and value for money

All the issues covered above contribute to a higher quality of life. Improving and extending the library service would be an economic way to provide better local services. However, at a time when local government is being starved of funding the issue of value for money becomes even more significant than usual.

⁵ The Future High Street pub. <http://www.futurespacesfoundation.org>

⁶ <http://scottishlibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/alma-uk-final-report-01-04-2014-1.pdf>

The justification of publicly supported libraries during periods of fiscal austerity has been brought into question, not just in England or Herefordshire, but around the world. The issue has been studied widely in the English speaking world, particularly by the academic community, and in the UK the Arts council have been active in supporting research in this area.⁷

A review of such studies in English language countries was presented in the Public Libraries News.⁸ The main question in the research was: for every £1 paid into libraries, what was the economic benefit to the community? Among the studies in this review, the following results were found:

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|
| • Australia | £2.30 | • UK | £7.90 |
| • Australia | £3.50 | • UK | £1.60 |
| • Australia | £2.90 | • USA | £3.89 |
| • Canada | £5.63 | • USA | £2.86 |
| • Canada | £5.36 | • USA | £4.42 |
| • New Zealand | £4.00 | | |

While the eleven studies varied considerably in design and methodology, the results are consistently positive. From the highest result of £7.90 returned for every £1 spent to the lowest of £1.60, The average of the result was £4.03 return for each £1 spent.

Meanwhile a DCMS report has estimated the value to individuals of library use. A significant association was also found between frequent library use and reported wellbeing. Using libraries frequently was valued at £1,359 per person per year for library users, or £113 per person per month.⁹

⁷ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Evidence_review_economic_contribution_libraries_2014.pdf

⁸ <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/reasons-for/reasons-for-libraries-values-for-money>

⁹ Quantifying and Valuing the Wellbeing Impacts of Culture and Sport April 2014 DCMS report

Our Vision for Herefordshire

The library users and supporters in the county come in all ages, locations and types – what unites them is the recognition of libraries as that rare service which joins all the dots – the starting point for the search for information, support, entertainment and development. We all want to see the county prosper and develop without losing the things we treasure, from landscape and heritage to civic values and culture. A healthy, efficient and accessible library service contributing to each of the Herefordshire Council objectives is a solid foundation for that.

We visualise a thriving well staffed library service forming a key element in the City of culture bid, a valuable cultural resource to the future University, a crucial support for business and enterprise from the traditional agricultural enterprise to the emerging knowledge economy. We consider a 21st Century library service to be vital to all sectors of the county from the toddler meeting books for the first time, to the active retired seeking stimulus and new skills.

At the heart of that service we look forward to a new and transformed Central Library in Broad Street, the heart of the service. We anticipate that **The Rankin Centre** will become a cultural and information hub to bring together community services, tourism, business support, digital access and a modern library display, and become a meeting place for young and old with active links to museums and archives.

As we have seen, one of interesting features of the Library Service in Herefordshire is the extraordinary variety – and that in turn gives us some clear ideas about the possibilities and risks for the future:

Volunteer Libraries

It is true that a “community library” – or volunteer library to give it a more accurate name – is possible and can be successful. Peterchurch and Leintwardine are shining examples. However, they are very small libraries in very small communities which happen to have sufficient able and willing volunteers to keep them alive. They are also successful because of the professional support from the employed library team. They do not run without staff costs. Extending this model to larger libraries simply will not work – there is too much complexity and financial responsibility. It would place too great a demand on the already over stretched pool of volunteers and it would undermine the infrastructure which allows the current volunteer libraries to function. The outcome would be the loss of the larger libraries – which is not acceptable to any of us – and probably endanger the current volunteer libraries as well.

Library “plus”

The development of the **Kington Centre** is an excellent example of using a library as the footprint of the council within a community – delivering a range of health, wellbeing and information services alongside the library role. As austerity increasingly reduces services, this kind of synergy is increasingly important and logical. The **Ross Library** model, extending the use and defraying the costs of the building through the presence of the Jobcentre is another example. Both work because they extend the essential model of the library as a place for everyone and a source of information and support. **Leominster** offers similar possibilities.

There is clearly real potential, where space permits, in creating this kind of community hub, which becomes the first port of call for visitors and residents alike and contributes to prosperous and lively high streets. What is crucial is that the buildings are open and fully staffed with professionals.

Executive Summary

Faced with funding cuts there are two basic options for Herefordshire's libraries: cut expenditure or increase income. Herefordshire Library Service is known to be one of the most cost effective in the country. There is little left that can be cut without fatally damaging the service.

Libraries are excellent value for money. National and international research shows clearly that they provide a real return on investment for individuals and communities alike. Libraries are also the Council's presence in each community. They can provide the access point to most Council services and are a key factor in the county's economy.

The way forward has to be to increase income. This can be done indirectly by continuing the achievements made so far in developing libraries as multi service hubs. Libraries are known to be uniquely safe and welcoming places, especially for young children and frail adults. With access to Council services being increasingly online, libraries are ideally placed to support this. More directly there are opportunities for hiring out space/meeting areas, running events, and merchandising.

Whilst we recognise the pressures on local budgets we believe that exploring new opportunities and investing in both premises and, most importantly, in professional staff will bring real benefits and enable the Library Service to become a crucial player in the future prosperity and well-being of Herefordshire and its residents.

Annexe:

A Portrait Gallery

As mentioned earlier Herefordshire has an astonishing range of libraries, in location, size, activity and style. Here we take a look at a few of them in the words of their own users, to get a taste of that variety and perhaps an indication of what can be achieved with further investment and support. Despite its obvious importance, we have not included the Central Library in Broad Street since it is currently closed.

The Kington Centre (Library) is a pilot for a health and wellbeing centre and is located in a very rural part of the County, with poor public transport, so many of the users rely on it for access to services and activities. The Centre provides the Herefordshire Council (HC) library service and access to the HC customer services and facilitates and promotes relevant health and wellbeing events. This includes the Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Service (public health), the Pharmacy health promotion such as blood pressure testing, WISH pop-up, Baby Play, Functional English classes, IT workshops and much more. The community library option, would still require at least one full time member of staff to mobilise and organise since everything else in Kington is already run by volunteers and library has become a catalyst to encourage a wider range of community action. Apart from the fact of limited funds, Kington Town council could face a major legal challenge if they provided additional funds to support the service since residents in the adjacent parish councils are also library users.

Ledbury Library has seen significant increase in use since the move to the Master's House. This is in line with general evidence in the UK and worldwide, that when there is investment in libraries, there is increased use. The increase in children's membership has been particularly good. Schools activities have been piloted this year which have been a huge success. Research shows that children who use libraries during the summer holidays do not suffer the dip in attainment experienced by those who don't read in the summer. Given that the Ledbury Cluster of Schools achieves results above average for the county, this is an important aspect and underpins good levels of child literacy.

The Library and Customer Services team, together with the Ledbury Library Development Group and the Friends of the Master's House, has put on a wide range of events through the year. Some of these have been supported by HLF funding and overall these have been cost neutral or generated some income. In addition, the improved library facility and the events have brought in more visitors and this has supported the economy of the town.

The Customer Services element has proved extremely important. This cannot be measured by numbers alone. We have a significant proportion of people who have low levels of, or no, computer literacy and for many, their only access to the internet is via computers at the library. This is particularly important for job seekers. Customer Services are highly valued in the town. Even residents with good levels of computer literacy struggle with the Council's website and access to services and value the support from the team.

Overall, the 'operation' in Ledbury is very complex. We note in the report to the Scrutiny Committee that there is strong emphasis on the use of volunteers. The LLDG are very aware that the 'volunteer population' in Ledbury is extremely stretched and volunteers only come forward on an ad hoc basis, preferring to avoid long term, regular commitments. Given this, and the fact that staffing libraries with volunteers does not produce much of a saving since the cost of the support staff needed increases dramatically

– the LLDG do not believe that Ledbury Library could be run by volunteers. We are clear that Ledbury Library remains a core part of the town’s economy and should be treated as an investment not a cost.

Since 2014, **Leintwardine Library** has been staffed by volunteers, with the support and supervision of qualified staff based at Leominster Library. The site costs (rent and electricity) are now funded by the Parish Council. This has been a great success. The volunteers remain enthusiastic and committed, and have become thoroughly competent in performing their duties. Library use has increased by 13%, and a new support group, Friends of Leintwardine Community Library (FOLCL), has been established. FOLCL now organises activities aimed at promoting the library as a community hub. These activities include creative writing and craft competitions for local school children, a mini-festival “Shake-fest” to mark the Shakespeare 400th anniversary, World Book Night celebrations with local authors, readings and free-book give-aways and activity mornings for younger children.

Leominster Library is well sited in the heart of the town in an attractive and easily accessed building. Like each of the other market town libraries they offer far more than “just books” and some examples of activities there in the last year include Bounce & Rhyme and Story Times each Thursday morning in term time, with up to 25 children attending each week , plus numerous other children’s craft, drama and storytime events. Adults are not neglected with talks, exhibitions , health advice, computer training, a family history course and a “murder mystery”. They also provided work experience for pupils from the local High School.

The Friends of Leominster Library would welcome the option of an Enhanced Service. Leominster Library is already multi-usage but there could be room for more especially if space is created in the Customer Services area with fewer operatives and an appointments only system to eliminate queues .

Proposals to maximise contact via the internet seem unrealistic in an area like North Herefordshire which has low % of PC ownership. We are also sceptical about the idea that "organisations" could operate libraries , covering costs with "some" support from the county library service. Even if Leominster was run entirely on site by volunteers we feel that a minimum of £50k pa would need to be guaranteed by Herefordshire Council, which seems unlikely in this climate.

Peterchurch; the library in the belltower Our small library was installed in the belltower of St.Peter’s Church, at the beginning of 2010. It was part of a new vision of using the church building for various communal purposes, and in particular to provide a much needed venue for Herefordshire Council to run its children's services (namely Sure Start) in the Golden Valley. As the mobile library service was about to be withdrawn, a space for a volunteer library was also needed. The project was funded by Grants, mainly from Herefordshire Council under its Leader project, the Big Lottery and Awards for All. An architect designed special ‘pod’ structure to contain stairs, a lift, a kitchen, an electricity board, and a mezzanine on the same level as the belltower/library, was built into the main body of the church building.

Volunteer librarians had been trained by the central library staff at Hereford beforehand, and the library is now run on a rota of about 18-20 volunteers, two afternoons a week and Saturday mornings 10am –noon. The weekdays sessions are wo-manned (no male volunteers yet) in two shifts (1-3pm and 3-5pm).

Without the help of a the dedicated professional librarians in Hereford, who deal with stock control, rotations of books to our library, a once a week delivery/pick up of reserved books/returning books, and any questions, problems, help and advice, as well as training up any new rota members, we would not be able to function and deliver the service to our village and surrounding villages. In particular, Jan Nesaratnam and Steve Jones among others have supported us throughout the years.

The library has been run for over six years now and is a very popular installation and meeting point for local people, also providing a social contact point, local news dissemination centre, support and advice.

In addition plans are afoot, and gaining momentum to expand services into the main body of the Church by relocating the volunteer-run cafe, which was open only one day a week, but which is due to re-open shortly on most weekdays, and extending the library. The office staff will be more on hand to deal with any matters arising and to welcome visitors into the newly created Hub for the Golden Valley Communities."

Ross Library is the best placed and most popular public building in Ross with 56 members of the public entering hourly, a total of 103,683 visits per year.

We have the advantage of a light and airy building that was constructed in 1988 to a design that has proved to be extraordinarily adaptable to changing demand. The Upper Floor/Mezzanine is the main working area for Library and Customer Services staff, with a rest room and kitchen. The Ground Floor houses the Library and Customer Services reception counter and enquiry desks and, since July 2014, the Job Centre Plus. The available rooms also host a range of other public services - the town's Registrar, the surgeries of local councillors, WISH and HMRC. The Dennis Potter Community Room is a reading and study space that is also available for community meetings, exhibitions, events and classes and could be further utilised. The Lower Ground Floor houses the Library shelves and back offices, the 11 public computers, and the libraries for children and teens.

The building lends itself to Enhanced Service. The tenancy of the Job Centre Plus has proved to be very successful, If appropriate staffing could be arranged it could host a wide range of evening and weekend courses. Currently the only evening when this is possible is the once-monthly Tuesday evening events of the Ross Library Development Group. Evening and weekend courses would generate new income through room rental. The introduction of a community well-being centre, with related events, classes and courses, quick health checks would be greatly welcomed, as would the consolidation of advice and support (already given) for IT training and advocacy, also for debt and finance, and for volunteering opportunities.

Ross Library is known to be a uniquely safe and welcoming environment in which staff and public have adapted to changes like electronic self-issue, online reservations etc. At the same time, responses to the most recent survey show how crucial it is for visitors to be able to browse (and introduce children to) a wide range of library stock, have the chance to access information (online as well as face to face) and IT training.

Ross and the community libraries that it supports would suffer badly from a crude cutting of staff. Instead Library and Customer Service staff who have proved their flexibility and adaptability should be retrained to further expand the range of community services that thrive on their close physical association with this much-loved Library.

Part 1: Herefordshire Library Service – Overview, Facts and Figures 2016

In Herefordshire over 23% of local residents are active library members (have had a library transaction within the last two years). This includes customers who join to access the public computers, borrow inter-library loans, use online resources or access other library services, as well as those who borrow library resources. In 2015 over 18% of people in the county had at least one item on loan. This reduced to 17% following the temporary closure of Hereford Library.

There are eleven libraries across the county that Herefordshire Council supports or runs. The central library in Hereford is the largest site which holds 30% of the county's active library stock and also houses the county's local studies and special collections. Housed in an iconic Victorian building in Broad Street opposite Hereford Cathedral, it shares the building with Hereford Museum and Art Gallery. Libraries also operate in Ross-on-Wye, Leominster, Ledbury, Bromyard and Kington, a satellite branch at Belmont, smaller community libraries in the rural hinterland and a countywide network of 12 community-run rural book schemes.

The libraries in the market towns also include Herefordshire Council Customer Services and other services. For example, Ross Library has the Job Centre Plus on site, Bromyard library is co-located within a Halo Leisure Centre, and in Ledbury the library is located in the Master's House development, sharing a site with other public and voluntary services to utilise a historic building in the heart of the town.

Smaller branch libraries and book schemes are run in partnership with the community. Leintwardine, Peterchurch and Weobley libraries are Community Libraries staffed by volunteers with ongoing support and training from professional library staff, including the provision of book stock and public computers. Belmont and Colwall Libraries are Partnership Libraries where the parish council contributes to the running costs of the site. They all form part of the public library service in Herefordshire, linked by the computerised Library Management System, with regular deliveries for reservations and new stock.

There are currently 12 community-run book schemes that operate from village halls, community centres and village shops, providing a focus for community activity. They are not linked to the Library Management System, but are supported by the county library service team and get a regular exchange of library books on a six or eight week basis. Many of these contribute to a wider 'hub' in their communities, operating alongside village coffee mornings while contributing to the resilience and sustainability of village markets and village shops.

As well as static libraries the county library service includes a number of other elements:

Delivered Services - provides a regular supply of books and talking books to people who are housebound and unable to access a library. The service delivers to around 160 individuals and 30 residential homes/sheltered housing centres and is often described as a lifeline for people who are at risk of feeling isolated and lonely. They also provide regular deliveries to the libraries and the 12 community-run book schemes.

The Schools Library Service - supports local schools by providing books and project material to support learning and reading for pleasure. Last year over 90 primary and high schools subscribed to the Herefordshire Libraries service to schools. The schools service is effectively cost neutral with the schools paying for the library service they receive.

Stock and Reader Services - is responsible for the county library service strategy and development. This team includes the professional librarians who are responsible for library services for children and young people, local

studies, digitisation projects, bibliotherapy, work with special groups, new libraries and refurbishment projects, funding bids, community outreach, partnerships, reader development, community libraries, community-run book schemes, training and support for volunteers, and work with library Friends groups.

The team also provides strategic and operational support and training to the frontline library staff, partners and volunteers. They select and process all the library stock, manage the library IT and library management systems, library budgets, contracts and performance management, compile reports and statistics and report annually to CIPFA and other government bodies. They also deliver the service to Readers Groups and Inter-Library Loans.

Statutory service

Libraries are a statutory service and local authorities have a duty under the **1964 Public Libraries & Museums Act** to provide “a comprehensive and efficient library service” to local people. The meaning of “comprehensive and efficient” is not defined, though the act does state the main services that library authorities must deliver in order to comply with the “comprehensive and efficient” requirement. In summary, they must:

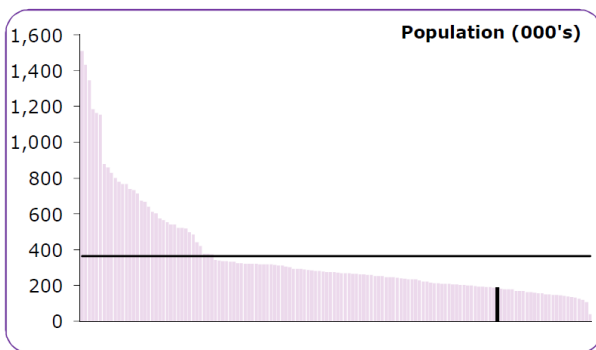
1. Ensure access to sufficient quantity, range and quality of library stock and other resources to meet the general requirements and special requirements (e.g. audio books or large print) of both adults and children; by keeping adequate library stocks, by arrangements with other library authorities, and by any other appropriate means.
2. Encourage and promote adults and children to make full use of the library service; provide advice and information to support library use; and provide access to bibliographic information (e.g. the library catalogue).
3. Ensure full co-operation by any persons delivering the library service on behalf of the local authority and any other service delivered within the library area.

Herefordshire Libraries – Facts and Figures

Herefordshire in comparison to other library authorities in the UK

Libraries provide many other services as well as access to books, but surveys have indicated that borrowing books is still the main reason customers' visit libraries, although they may combine it with other services when they are there. To meet customer's general requirements the library service provides fiction and non-fiction titles for all age groups covering a wide range of subjects. Meeting special requirements includes the provision of large print and audio books. Specialist topics and academic works are provided through Inter-Library Loan arrangements, while many reference titles are now available 24/7 as online resources.

The following tables are taken from the CIPFA report for 2014-15, which is the latest published report available (published January 2016). These tables show where Herefordshire comes in comparison with all other library authorities in England.



Population

Herefordshire is the 26th smallest of the 138 authorities compared here (in terms of population).

Figure 1

Number of libraries

The chart on the left (Fig 2) compares the number of libraries with the other authorities in the comparison. Herefordshire has 10 statutory libraries compared to an average of 21. The chart on the right (Fig 3) shows the number of libraries per 100,000 population.

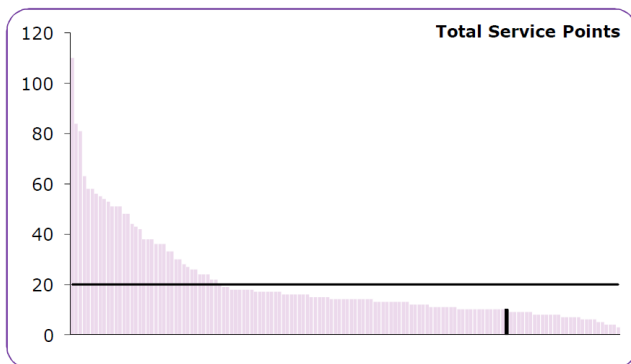


Figure 2

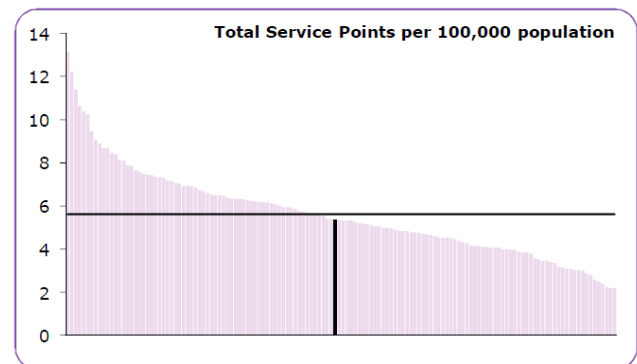


Figure 3

Expenditure

The chart on the left (Fig 4) shows revenue expenditure per 1,000 population. The chart on the right (Fig 5) shows net expenditure which is revenue expenditure and income combined as a key cost indicator.

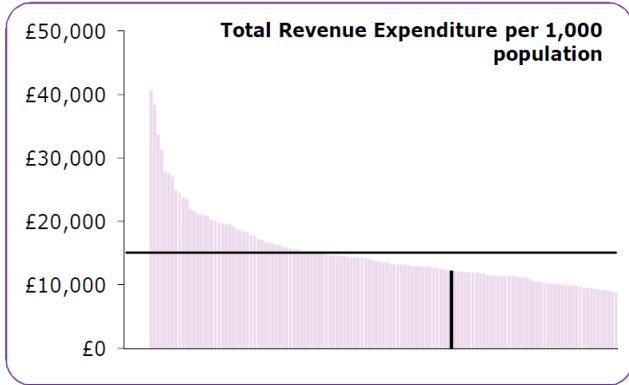


Figure 4

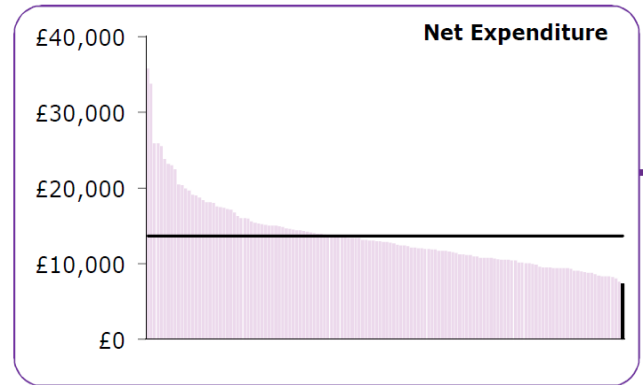


Figure 5

Library visits

The number of visits per 1,000 population (Fig 6) is another measure of engagement and offers a more complete picture of library usage as it will include other reasons for visiting the library as well as borrowing; although it does not include visits to the building for other purposes (e.g. DWP, Halo, Registrars, CAB, etc.)

Opening Hours

One of the factors that may limit the number of potential library visits is the number of hours libraries are open. The chart on the right (Fig 7) shows the opening hours in the service point that issues the most items. In Herefordshire, the busiest library is Hereford Library.

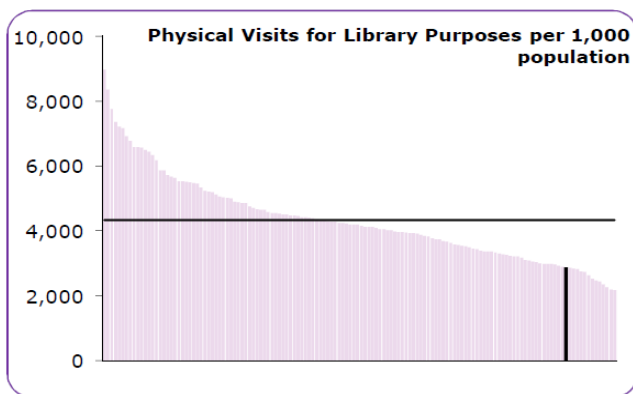


Figure 6

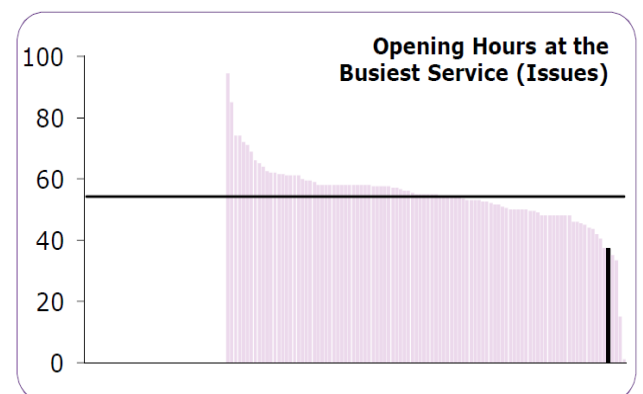


Figure 7

Library stock - issues, stock levels, cost, and turnover

The charts below show Herefordshire's position next to other library authorities in terms of the number of books issued per 1,000 population (Fig 8), and the total book stock available per 1,000 population (Fig 9).

Herefordshire purchases library stock from specialist contract suppliers and negotiates stock discounts through a competitive tender process as part of a regional consortium with four neighbouring authorities. Fig 10 shows the average cost per book acquired: Herefordshire average: £6.02, National average: £7.03

The stock turn chart (Fig 11) shows the average number of times each item was issued during the year. This is an indication of how hard the library stock is working. It may also be also an indication of stock quality and whether the titles provided meet local demand.

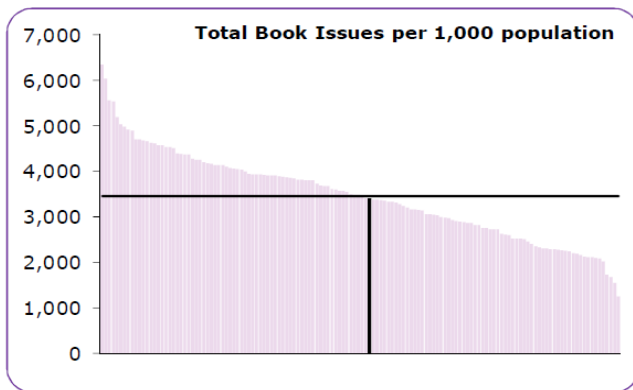


Figure 8

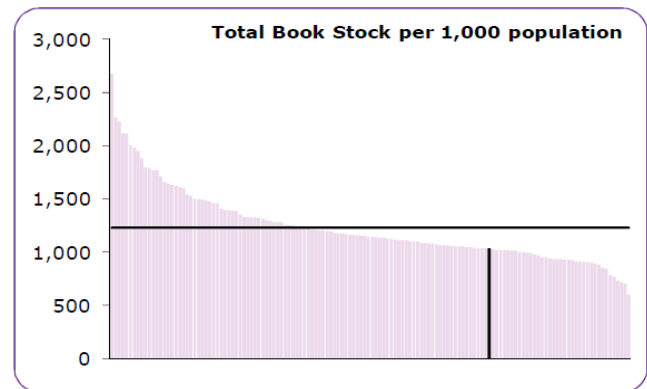


Figure 9

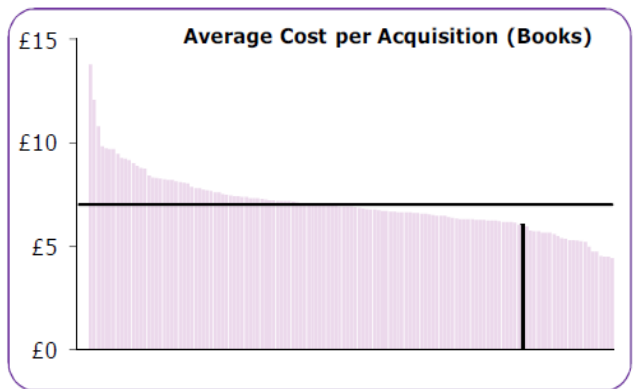


Figure 10

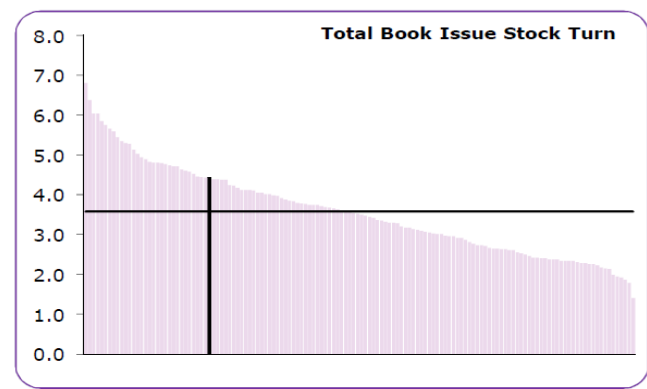


Figure 11

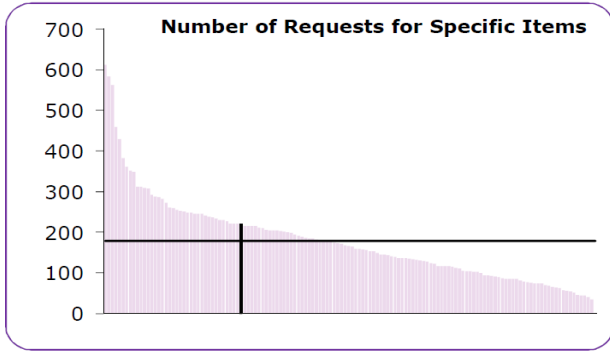


Figure 12

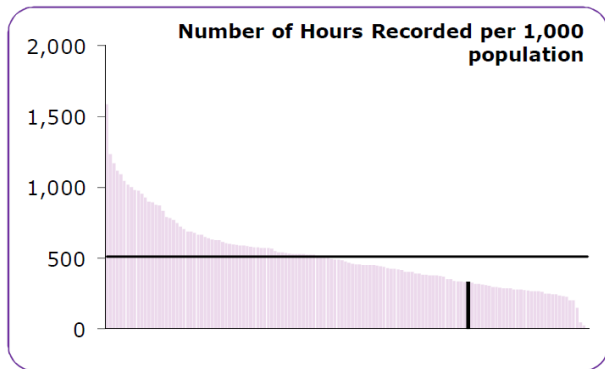


Figure 13

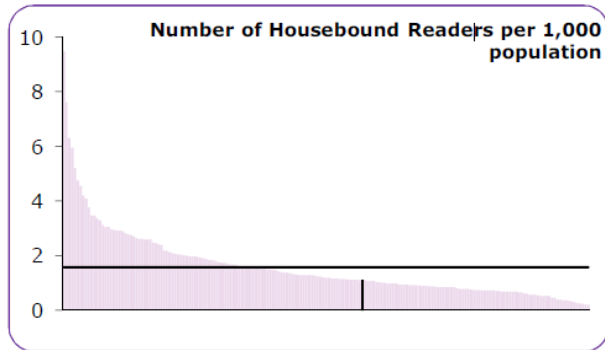


Figure 14

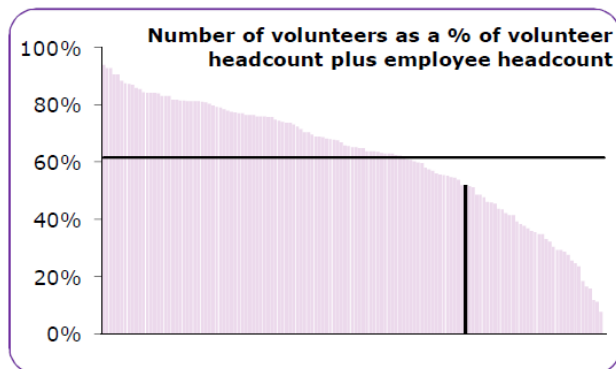


Figure 15

Request service

Herefordshire uses library stock as a county-wide resource and reservations for lending items on the library catalogue are free to library members.

Fig 12 shows that in 2014-15 there were 41,269 reservations for items in stock in Herefordshire libraries. 64% were reserved online.

(In 2015-16 there were 39,018 reservations for items in stock in Herefordshire libraries; 67% were reserved online).

Computer usage

The use of public computers in libraries is another key indicator of library usage. This chart shows the number of hours recorded on public library computers per 1,000 population. (It does not include wifi usage).

Housebound readers

Herefordshire Libraries runs a delivered service to Housebound customers, residential homes and sheltered housing schemes. This chart shows the number of Housebound Readers per 1000 population compared to other authorities in England.

Volunteers

Many library authorities use volunteers to support library services. This chart compares the number of volunteers and paid employees.

In Herefordshire 50% of staffing hours are provided by volunteers.

Herefordshire Library and Customer Services annual statistics

The following Library statistics are taken from Herefordshire Libraries Alto Library Management System. The Customer Services statistics are taken from Herefordshire Council Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management system.

Where possible, the following statistics have been taken from the most recent financial year (2015-16). Because of the temporary closure of Hereford Library, in some cases that may not give an accurate picture of library usage: for example, use of public computers in libraries. In such cases the previous years' figures have been included for comparison, or a two-year data range has been used which more accurately reflects typical usage.

Herefordshire Library Service

On 11th September 2015, Hereford Library, the county's busiest library, closed for emergency building work. Opening hours at Belmont Library were extended and a temporary pop-up library opened at Hereford Town Hall on 24th November 2015. The temporary site holds a small selection of book and other resources and acts as an access point to the whole county library stock. There are no public computers available. Because of this, the figures for 2015-16 are not typical of annual library usage and should be treated with caution. We have included figures for 2014-15 for Hereford and Belmont (in italics) for comparison.

Library	Hours open per week (2016)	Visits per year	Visits per hour*	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Hereford / Town Hall	37.0	96,692	50	101,493	8,677	18 / 0	11,594	7,824
<i>Hereford 2014-15</i>	<i>37.0</i>	<i>184,434</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>175,638</i>	<i>11,840</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>25,359</i>	<i>15,555</i>
Leominster	35.5	102,211	55	109,912	6,984	12	11,775	8,424
Ross-on-Wye	35.5	103,683	56	97,997	7,093	11	10,139	6,991
Ledbury	32.5	110,450	65	57,545	3,870	5	4,311	3,126
Belmont	38	34,697	22	45,877	4,084	2	2,105	1,031
<i>Belmont 2014-15</i>	<i>22.5</i>	<i>22,527</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>26,100</i>	<i>2,390</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1,028</i>	<i>849</i>
Kington	18	20,769	22	17,037	1,880	7	2,265	3,302
Bromyard	24	12,448	9	17,560	1,769	7	2,114	1,459
Colwall	15.5	11,138	15	13,241	1,482	5	1,324	1,194
Leintwardine	9.5	2,769	7	5,183	563	1	77	49
Weobley	6.0	2,491	8	4,454	482	3	152	355
Peterchurch	10.0	1,890	4	3,108	429	0	n/a	n/a
Delivered Services	n/a	1,607	n/a	22,218	2,161	0	n/a	n/a
Stock Unit	n/a	n/a	n/a	15,968	315	0	n/a	n/a
Herefordshire	261.5	500,845	314	511,593	39,789	71	45,856	33,755

Table 1: Opening hours, visits, items loaned and reserved, and computer usage for 2015-16

*Visits per hour based on average hours open per week 2015-16 (some sites increased opening hours part way through the year)

In 2015-16 (March-April) libraries in Herefordshire received over 500,000 physical visits and loaned out over 511,000 items. There were nearly 46,000 computer sessions on library public access computers. Nearly 40,000 items were requested; 67% of these were reserved online.

Herefordshire library stock and borrower profiles

Library stock is used as a countywide resource which circulates around all sites. Customers can reserve any lending item on the library catalogue free of charge and have it delivered to any Herefordshire library. The following figure shows where most of the active library stock is located. Active stock means it has been issued in the past two years. This chart shows the proportions in March 2015, before the temporary closure of Hereford Library.

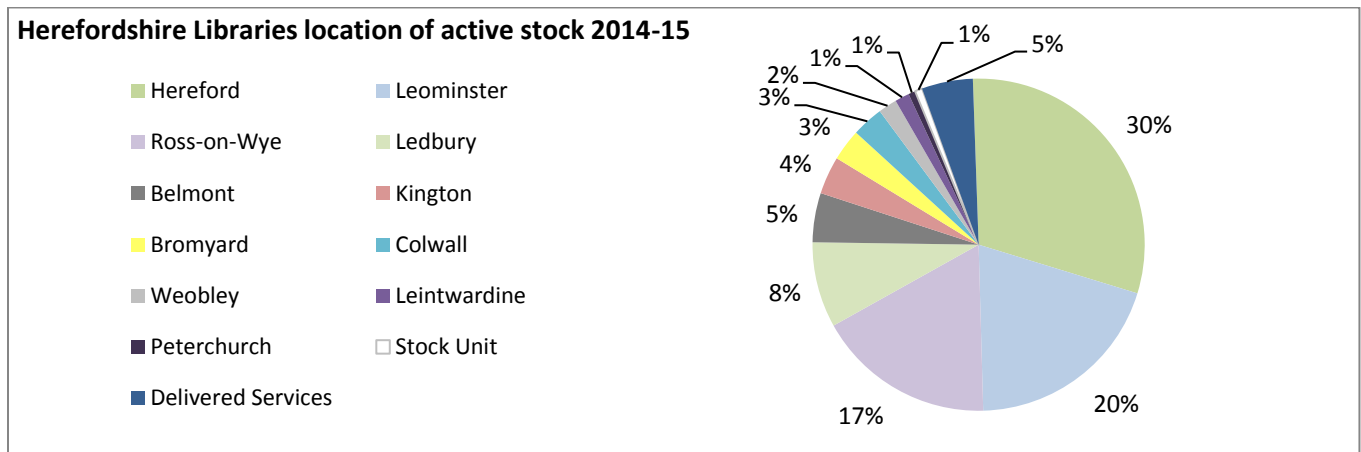


Figure 16

Figure 17 below shows the library loans by the different types of borrower. This is based on people who borrow items, so it doesn't include all the other reasons people visit the libraries. The largest group is adults, although there is significant use by children, particularly if you combine individual borrowing with loans to schools. There are also a large number of Access borrowers, which will include customers with visual impairment, learning disabilities, dementia, dyslexia, or other conditions which make it difficult to read a physical book.

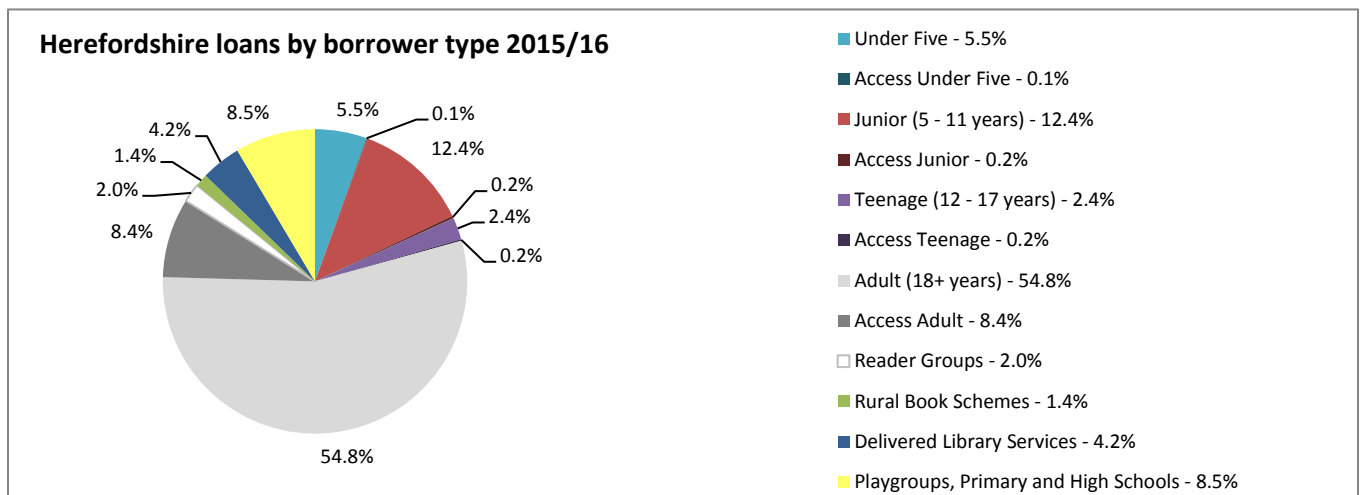


Figure 17

If the figures are broken down further, it shows that libraries are a whole-of-life service, but they are particularly important at certain times in people’s lives.

Most regular library users are first introduced to libraries as children: by parents, grandparents or schools. Research has shown that under-fives who regularly visit libraries have a significant advantage when they start school, and this advantage can continue right through primary and into high school. A significant number of teenagers do use libraries, but many drift away at this point as they move on to jobs or further and higher education. They come back when they need the library again: for studying, applying for jobs, looking for information or advice, gaining new skills, and most commonly when they have children of their own. As adults, some people use libraries very regularly, often on a weekly basis. Others drop in and out of library usage depending on their needs and available time. They may only come in a few times a year for particular purposes for a while until they have more time, or their needs change, but they still need and value the services the library provides and they likely to use the library more as they get older.

The chart below (Figure 18) shows the age breakdown of Herefordshire library members who have borrowed at least one book in the past year. It doesn’t include group members like playgroups, rural book schemes, readers groups, etc., or the few people who don’t have a date of birth on their record, but it does show that the full spectrum of the population uses libraries in Herefordshire, but some age groups use it more than most: specifically young children and older people.

Library use and borrowing by age

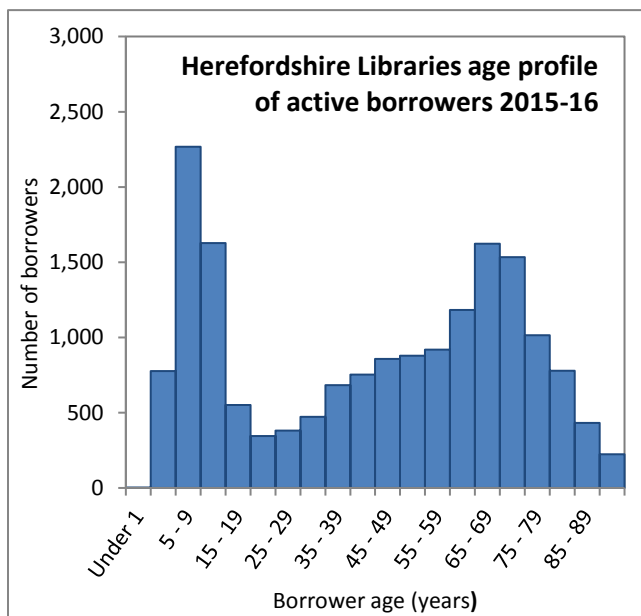


Figure 18

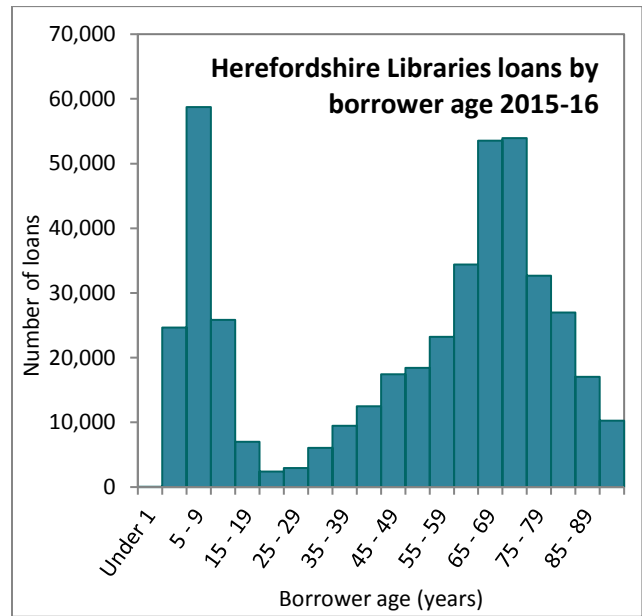


Figure 19

Borrowing books is still the main reason people visit libraries. Over half a million items were borrowed from Herefordshire libraries last year. The library loans by borrower age graph (Figure 19) shows how many items each age group borrowed. All age groups borrowed books and other items, but the groups that borrowed multiple items per person were children and over 65s. Other age groups also borrow books, but they are more likely to use

the library for other reasons as well - accessing customer services or DWP, using the public computers, studying and homework support, or parents/carers accompanying younger children.

The age profile of customers who use the public computers, however is quite different. The chart below (Fig 20) shows the age breakdown of Herefordshire library members who have used a library computer or library wi-fi in the last two years. The profile shows that members from all age groups use library ICT, with the highest use by young adults. The figures are taken from the libraries Netloan public computer management system. The site with the highest level of public computer use is Hereford Library, but the present temporary site doesn't have any public computers so a two-year sample was taken to demonstrate the standard pattern of usage.

Computer and wifi use by age

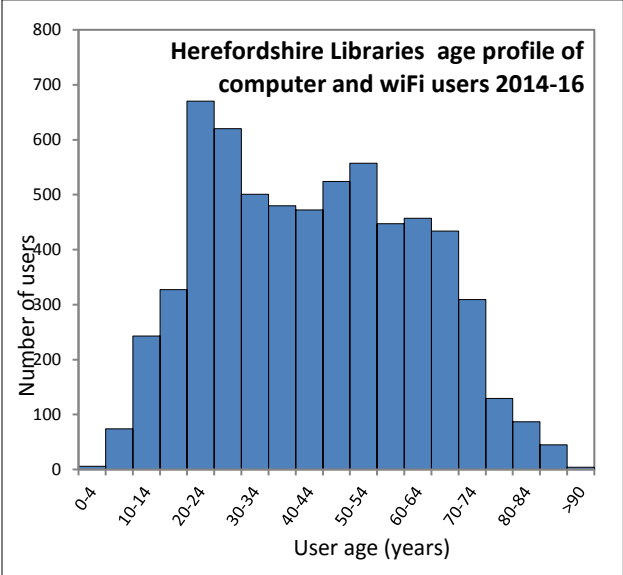


Figure 20

Mosaic Public Sector profiles

Mosaic Public Sector is a customer segmentation tool that classifies households and postcodes into one of 15 groups based on the likelihoods of the people living in them to have particular characteristics. It is unlikely that a household in a particular group will have every characteristic typical to that group, but it gives an insight into likely preference and behaviours that are not available elsewhere.

The charts below show the profile of Herefordshire residents who used Herefordshire libraries in 2014-16 compared to the profile of the county's population (it only includes people resident in Herefordshire, not those customers who live outside the county). Herefordshire library users have a broadly similar profile to the county population as a whole. Across Herefordshire by far the most prevalent group is A: *Country Living* and this is reflected in the profile of library users; however there is a notable difference between the profiles of members who borrow books and those who use library computers.

Significant groups in Herefordshire

A: Country Living – these are homeowners who live in the countryside often beyond easy commuting reach of major towns and cities. Some people are landowners or farmers, others run small businesses from home, some are retired and others commute distances to professional jobs.

Other significant groups are:

D: Rural Reality - people who live in rural communities and generally own their relatively low cost homes. Their moderate incomes come mostly from employment with local firms or from running their own small business.

F: Senior Security - The most elderly group (average age of 75); living independently with property equity. Some are living with their long-time spouse, but a larger number are now living alone, and women outnumber men.

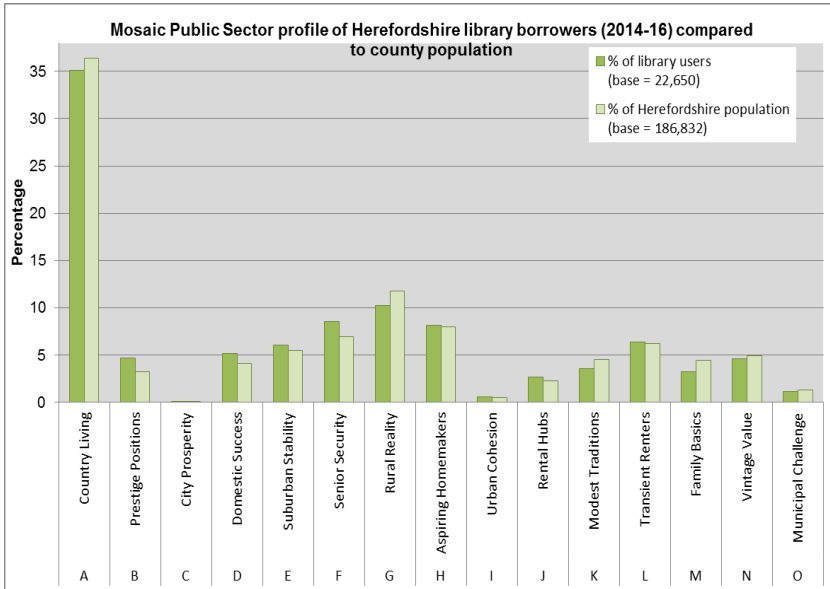
L: Transient Renters – generally single people, typically in their 20s and 30s, who pay modest private-sector rents for low cost homes. Many work full-time, however their lower skilled jobs mean that incomes are often limited.

M: Family Basics - families with children who have limited budgets and can struggle to make ends meet. Homes are low cost and are often found in suburban areas with fewer employment options. Some own their own homes, but more than half rent from social landlords. Families have the support of tax credits, but significant levels of financial stress still exist.

N: Vintage Value - elderly people (particularly women) who mostly live alone, either in social or private housing, often built with the elderly in mind. Levels of independence vary, but with health needs growing and incomes declining, many require an increasing amount of support.

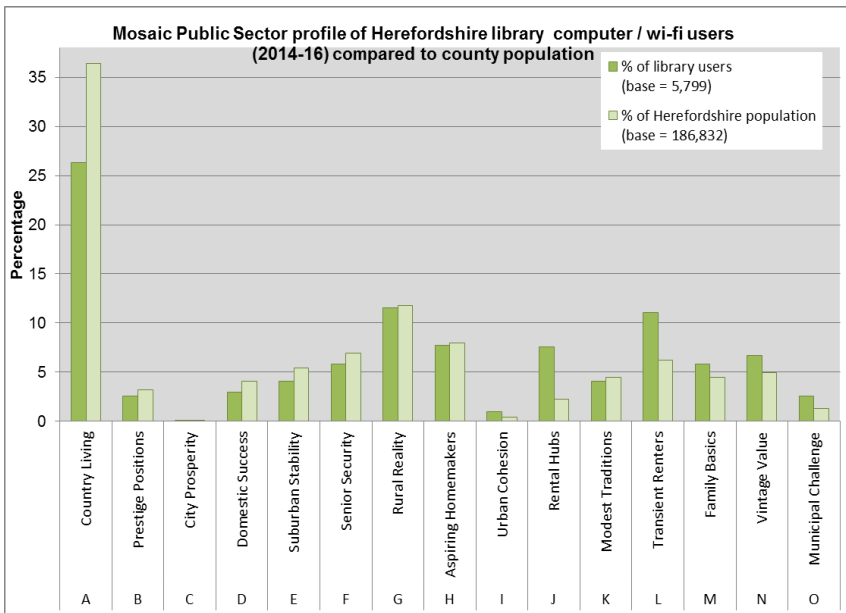
O: Municipal Challenge - long-term social renters living in low-value flats in urban locations, or small terraces on outlying estates - limited employment options and correspondingly low household incomes.

Mosaic profile of Herefordshire - library borrowers



The Mosaic Public Sector Profile of Herefordshire library members shows that people on lower incomes are more likely to use library computers and wi-fi. There is a higher proportion of *Rural Hubs*, *Transient Renters*, *Family Basics*, *Vintage Value* and *Municipal Challenge* groups, compared to the county population as a whole.

Mosaic profile of Herefordshire - users of library computers and wi-fi



Library branch profiles

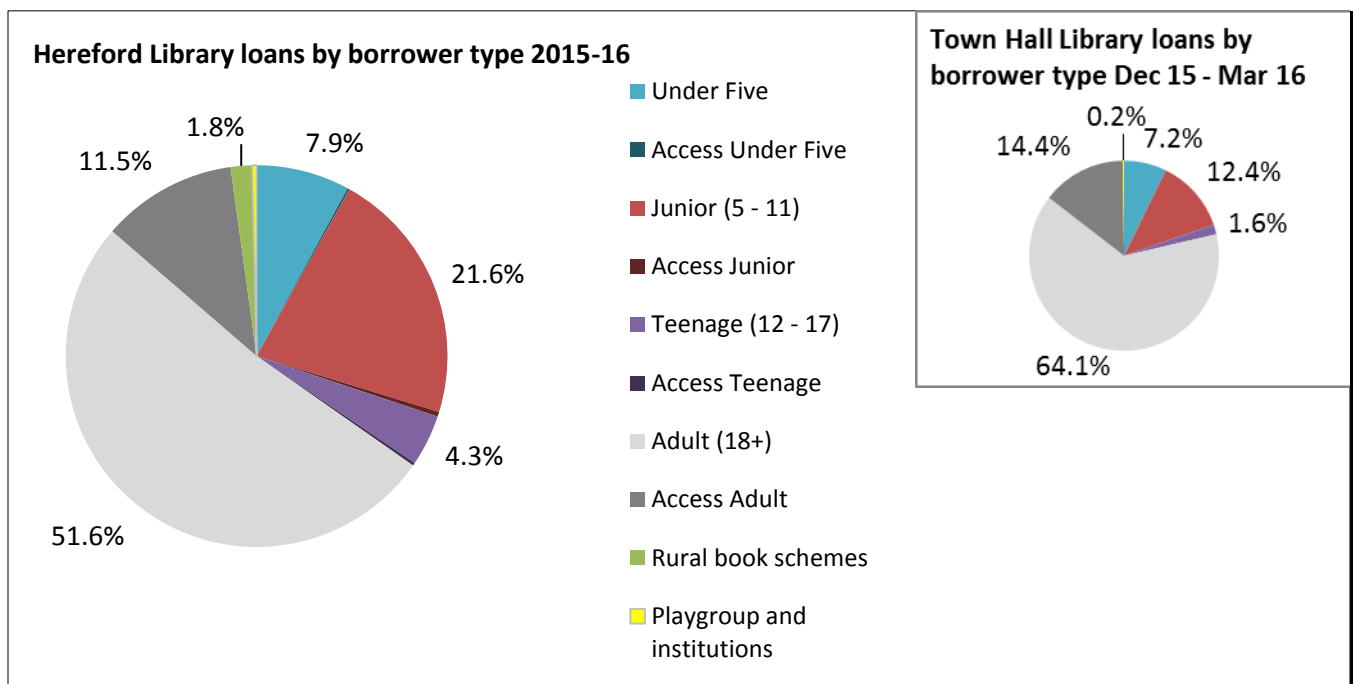
The following reports show the user profile for each library. What they demonstrate is that each library reflects their individual community and they are all slightly different.

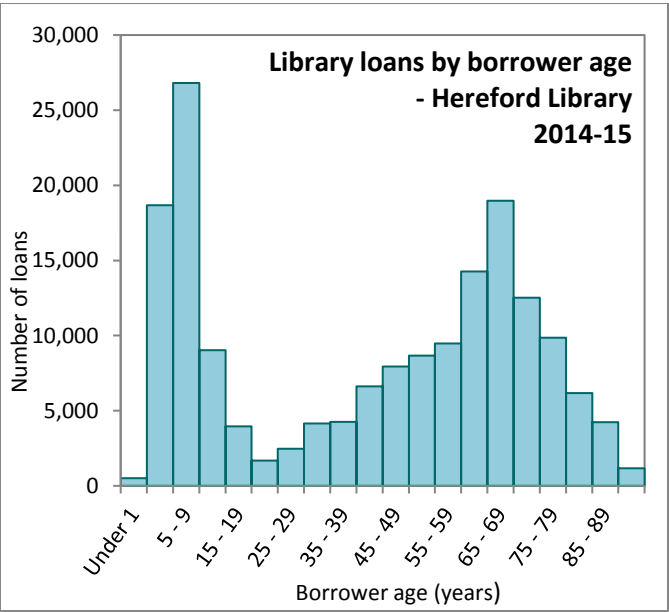
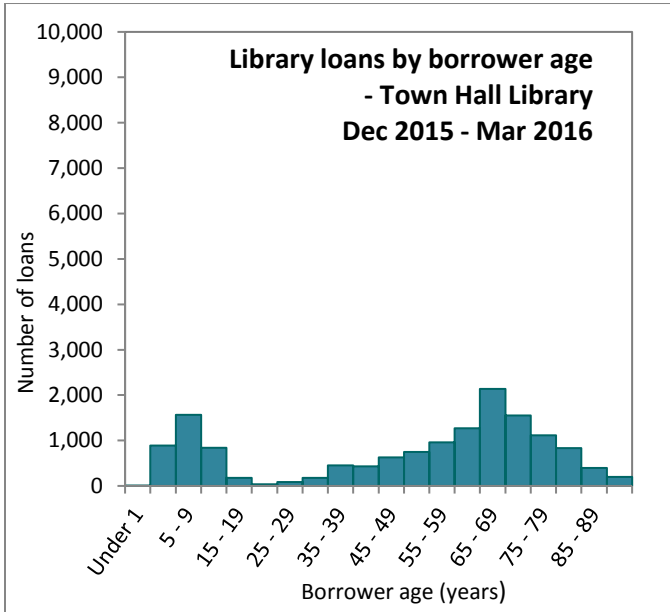
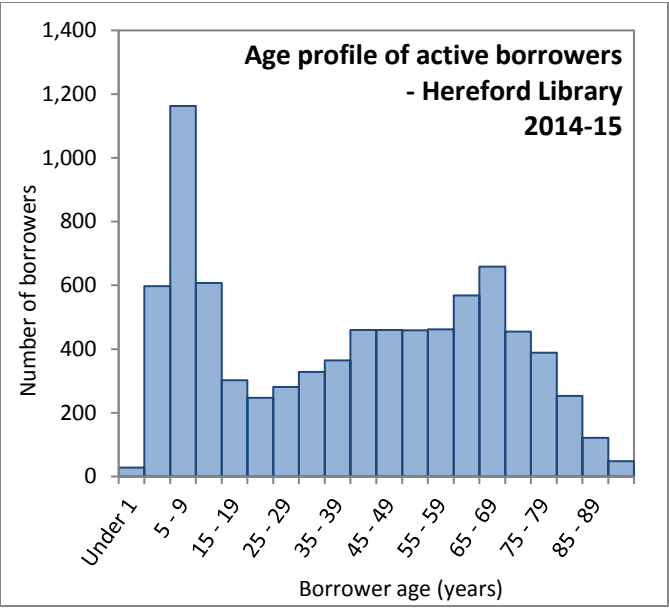
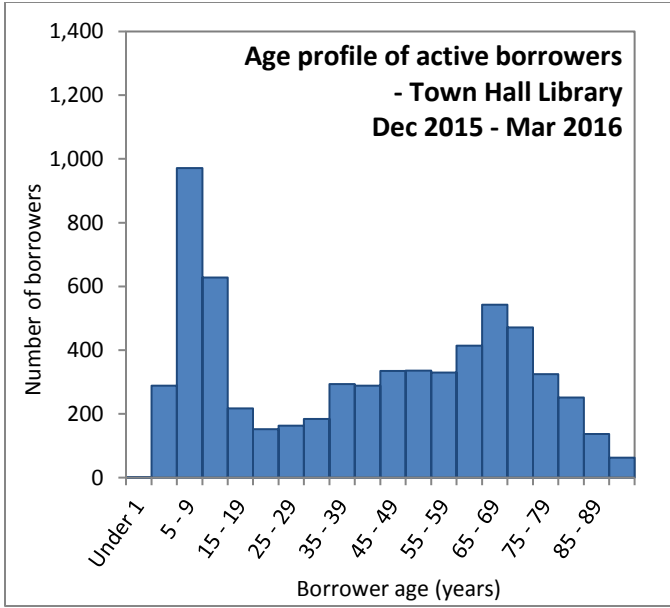
Hereford Library

Hereford Library is the largest library in the county. It holds 30% of the active library stock and houses the main reference and local studies collections. There is heavy use by all groups, including a large number of Junior, Under-fives and Access borrowers and a significant number of teenagers relative to the population. Hereford Library also supports local Playgroups and Rural Book Schemes in the centre of the county. Hereford has a younger age profile than the county as a whole. This may reflect the heavy usage of public computers and parents who bring young children to the library. Usage by older groups is proportionally lower than average in the county; one factor may be lack of parking nearby. Some customers who borrow items from Hereford Library return them to Belmont or Peterchurch Libraries where parking is available.

Hereford Library closed for essential building work on 11th September 2015. On 24th November a temporary pop-up library opened at Hereford Town Hall, offering a limited service with access to the whole county library stock through the free reservation system. The following tables show Hereford Library usage for 2014-15 and Hereford Town Hall Library usage for 2015-16 for comparison.

Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Hereford / Town Hall	37.0	96,692	50	101,493	8,677	18 / 0	11,594	7,824
<i>Hereford 2014-15</i>	<i>37.0</i>	<i>184,434</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>175,638</i>	<i>11,840</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>25,359</i>	<i>15,555</i>

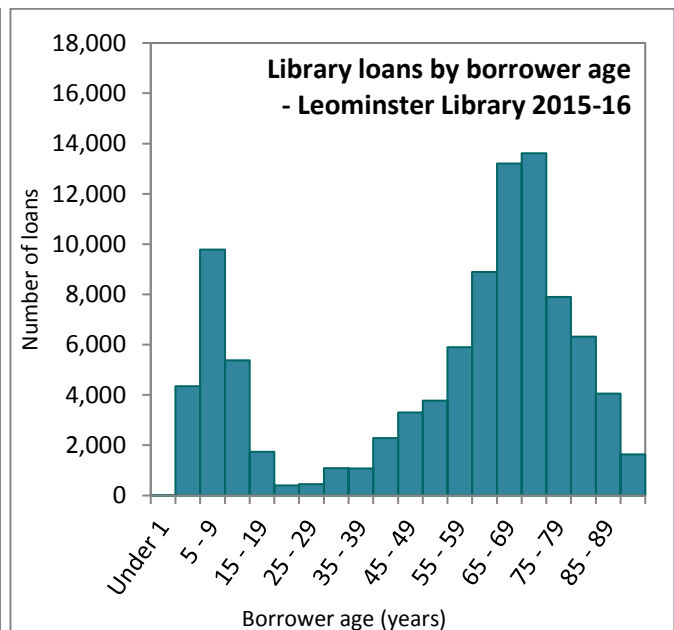
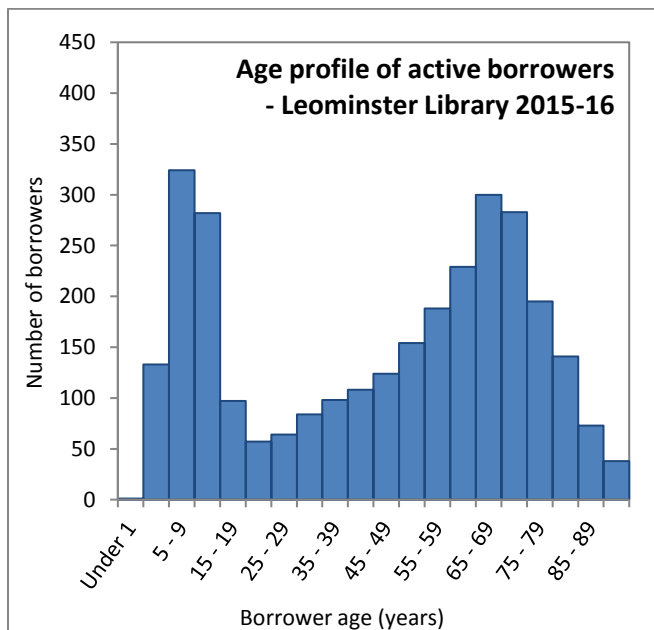
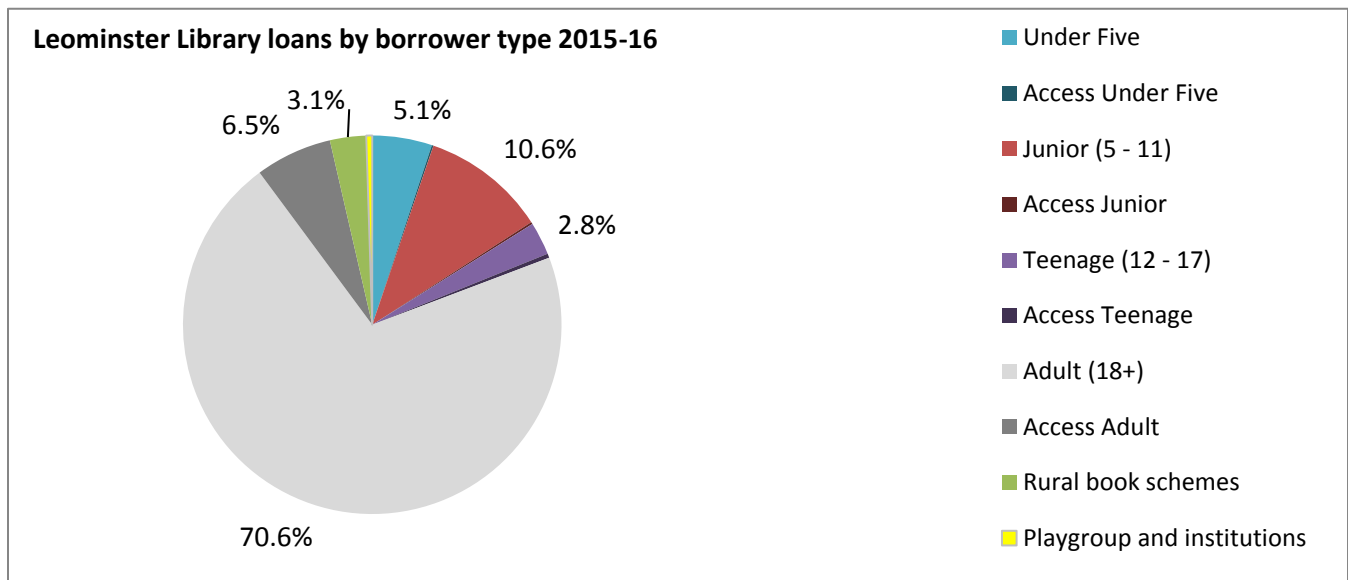




Leominster Library

Leominster is the largest library in the north of the county. It holds 20% of the active library stock. Leominster has significant usage by children and Access Borrowers, but the largest group of library users is adult. Leominster also supports Rural Book Schemes in the north and west of the county. It is used by all age groups, particularly over 60s. Leominster Library also includes Herefordshire Council Customer Services and other services. It also has exhibition space and meeting rooms for hire.

Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Leominster	35.5	102,211	55	109,912	6,984	12	11,775	8,424

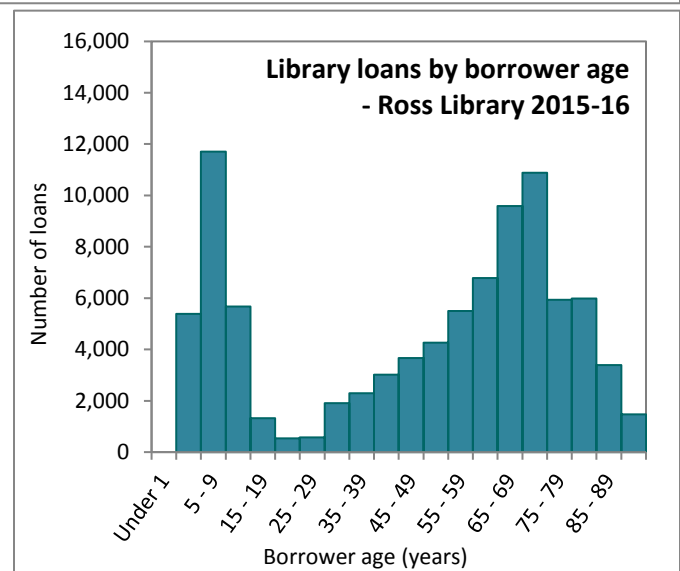
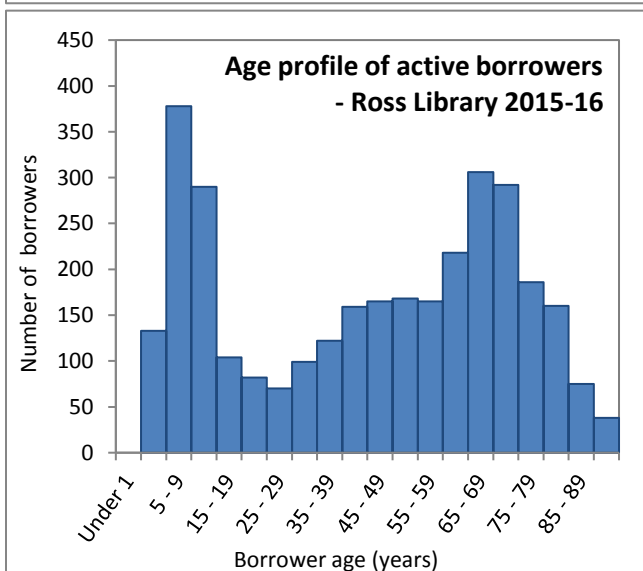
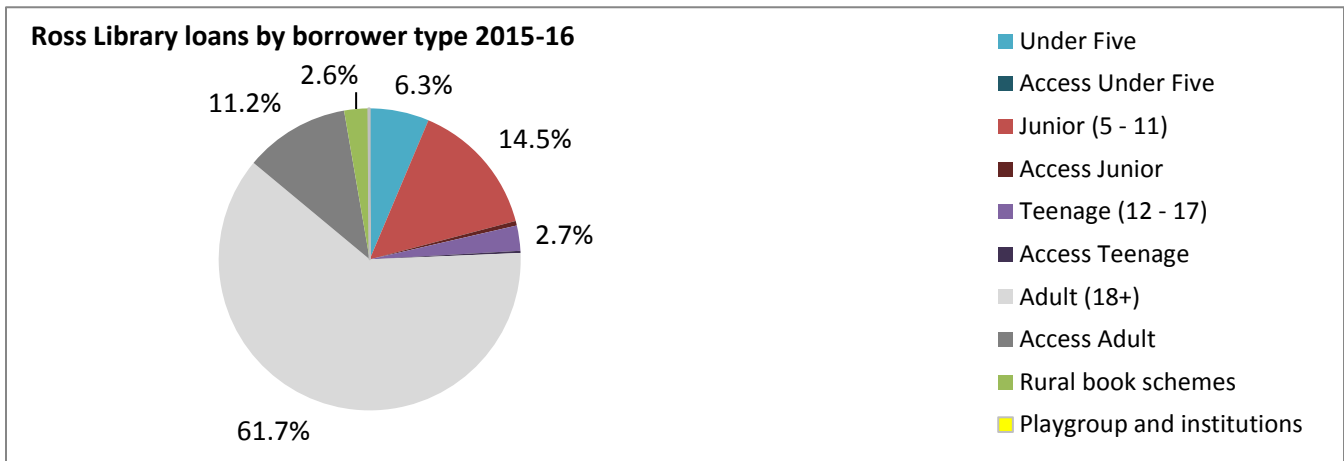


Ross Library

Ross Library is the largest library in the south of the county. It is comparable to Leominster in terms of usage, although Ross only holds 17% of the active library stock compared to Leominster's 20%. Ross has a similar number of library members as Leominster, but a different customer profile. Although adults still form the largest group of borrowers, there are large groups of children and teenagers, and a significant number of Access borrowers. Ross also supports the Rural Book Schemes in the south of the county and currently supports the Rural Book Schemes in the centre of the county while Hereford Library is closed. Ross Library includes Herefordshire Council Customer Services. Other services on site include the DWP Job Centre Plus and Registrars Service. It also has exhibition space for hire.

The age profile shows high usage by children and Access members, and a larger proportion of young adults than some other sites. This may be influenced by the presence of the DWP onsite, but is also a reflection of the local population profile.

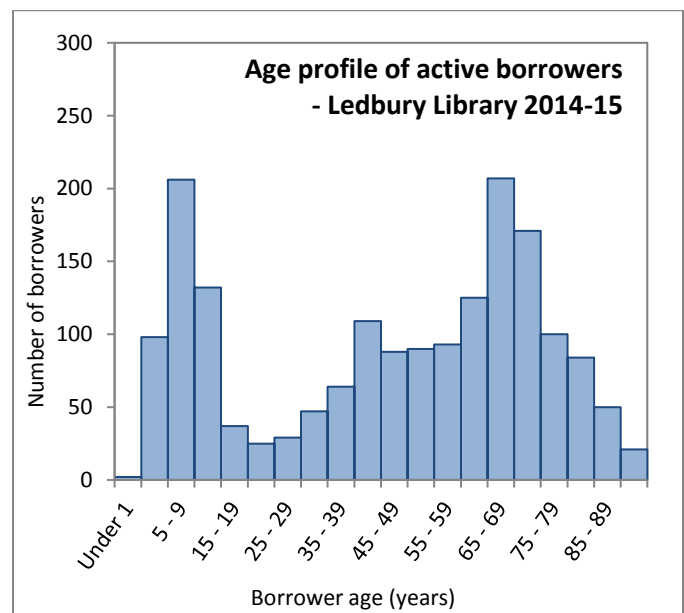
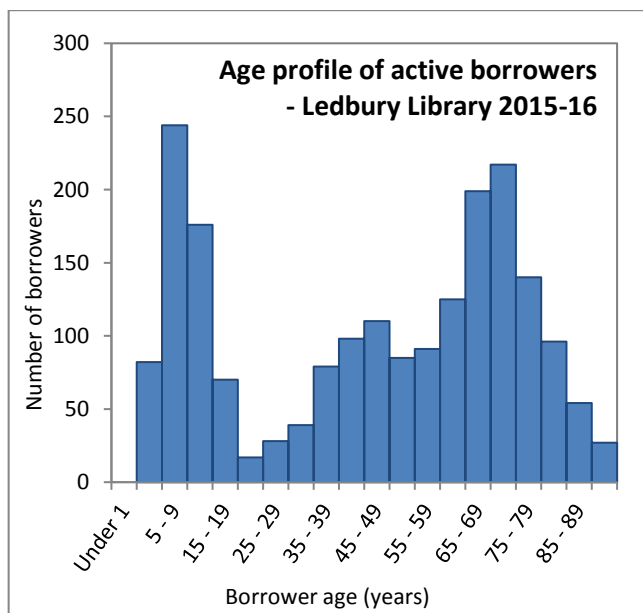
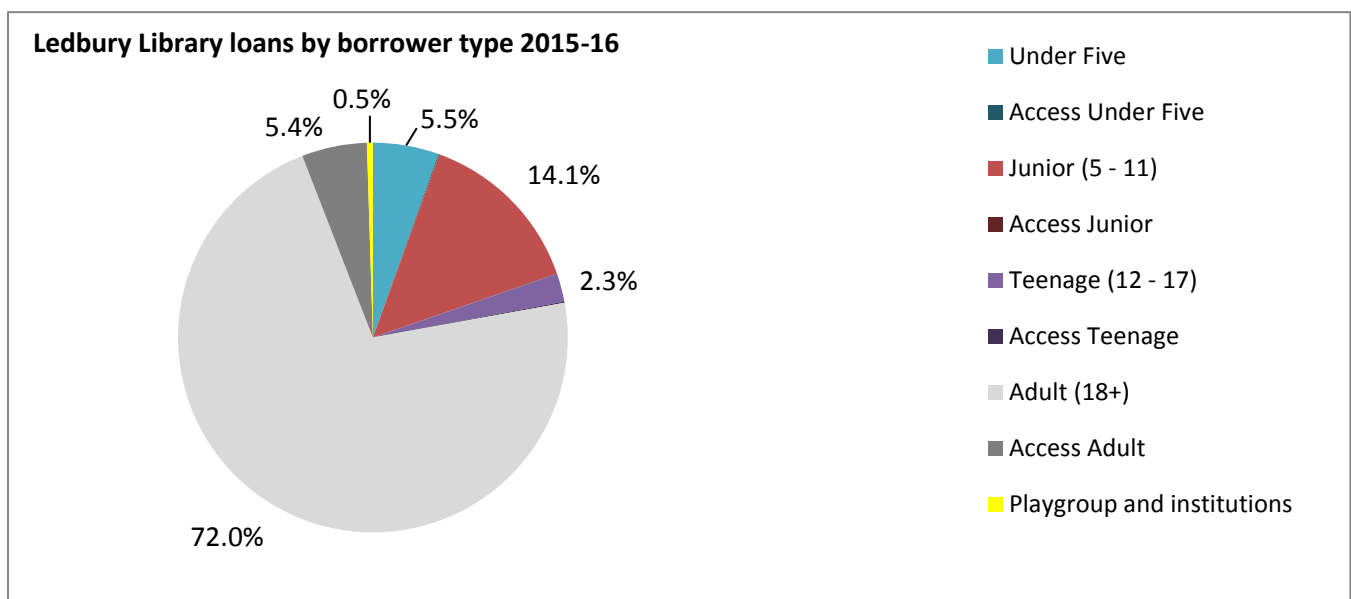
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Ross-on-Wye	35.5	103,683	56	97,997	7,093	11	10,139	6,991

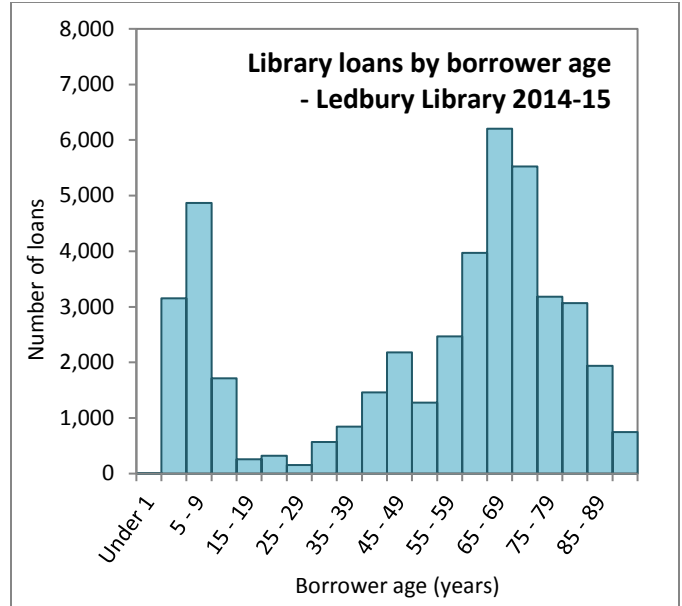
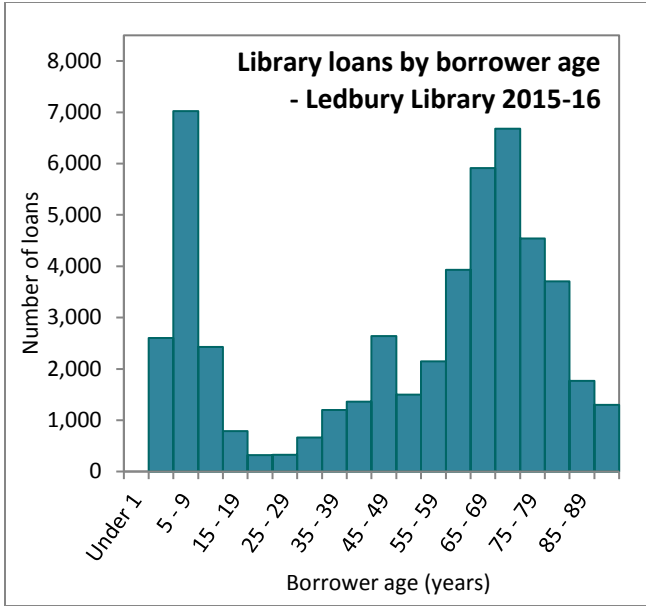


Ledbury Library

In March 2015 Ledbury Library relocated to The Master’s House, a unique medieval hall renovated as part of an HLF funded project. The charts below show the borrower profile in the old building 2014-15 and in the new site 2015-16. Ledbury Library also includes Herefordshire Council Customer Services.

Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Ledbury Library 2015-16	32.5	110,450	65	57,545	3,870	5	4,311	3,126
<i>Ledbury Library 2014-15</i>	<i>24.7</i>	<i>48,308</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>50,202</i>	<i>4,264</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>3,074</i>	<i>1,328</i>





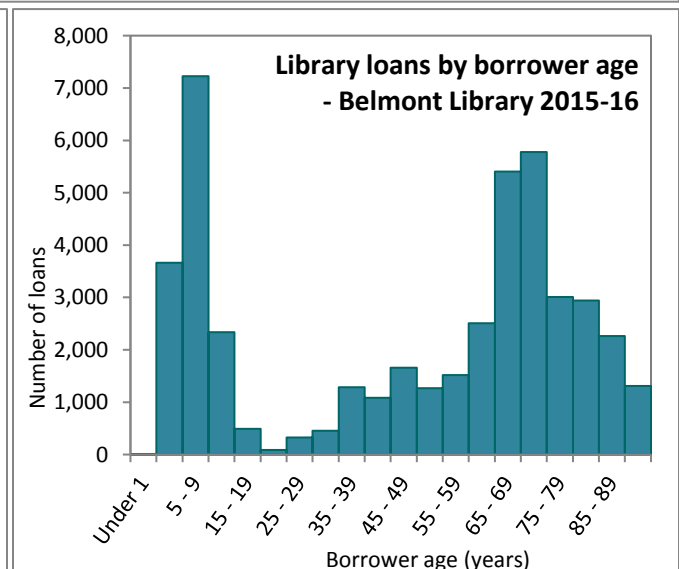
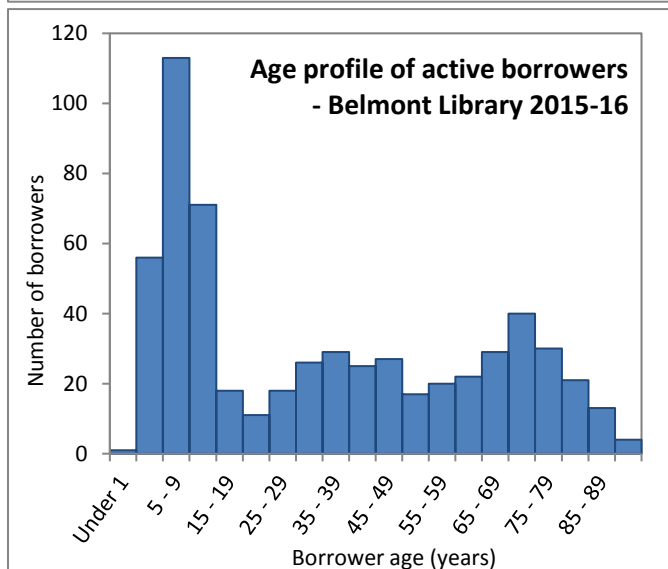
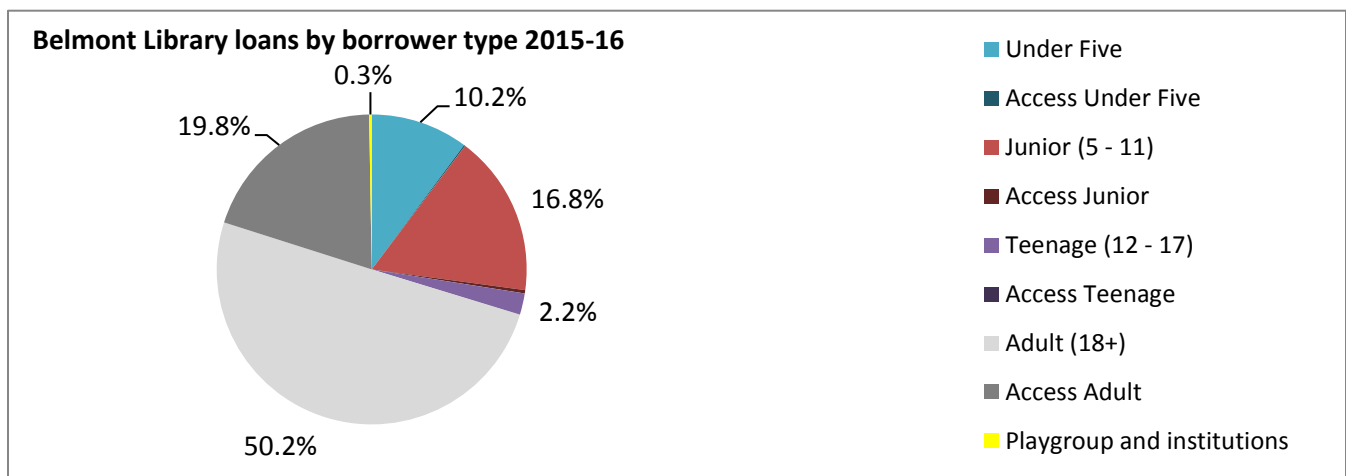
The tables above shows how library usage has changed since Ledbury Library moved to The Master’s House. Library usage in all age groups has increased since moving to the new building. Loans have increased by 7,343. Vists are up 129% and with Hereford closed this is now the most visited library in the county. Notably, usage by children and teenagers has grown significantly.

Belmont Library

Belmont Library is a Hereford satellite branch, located in Belmont Community Centre in the middle of a large residential development. The library membership has a noticeably younger age profile than the rest of the county with particularly high usage by children and Access members. Previous Impact Surveys have shown there is significant crossover with Hereford Library members and many Hereford borrowers use Belmont library to return items rather than travelling into the city centre.

On 11th September 2015, Hereford Library, the county's busiest library, closed for emergency building work. Opening hours at Belmont Library were extended and a temporary pop-up library opened at Hereford Town Hall. We have included figures for 2014-15 for Belmont (in italics) for comparison.

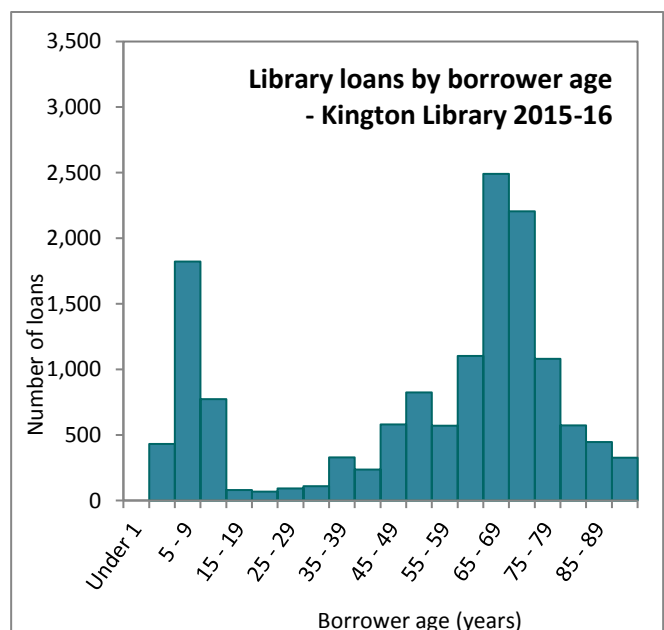
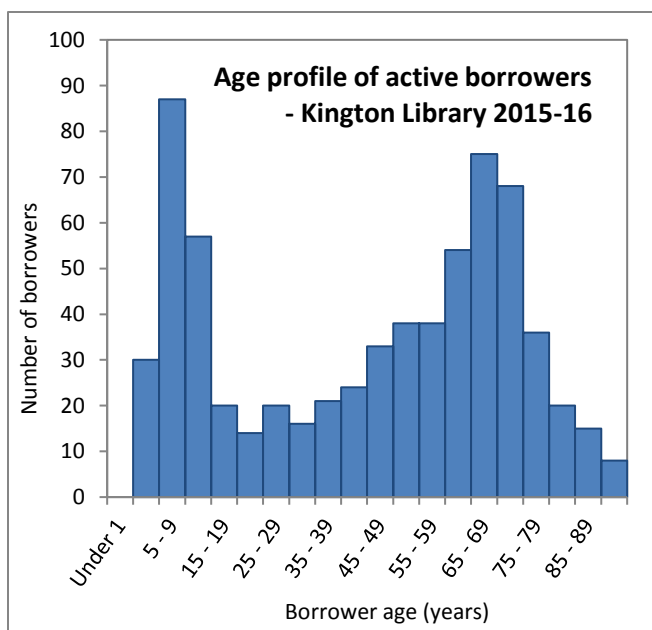
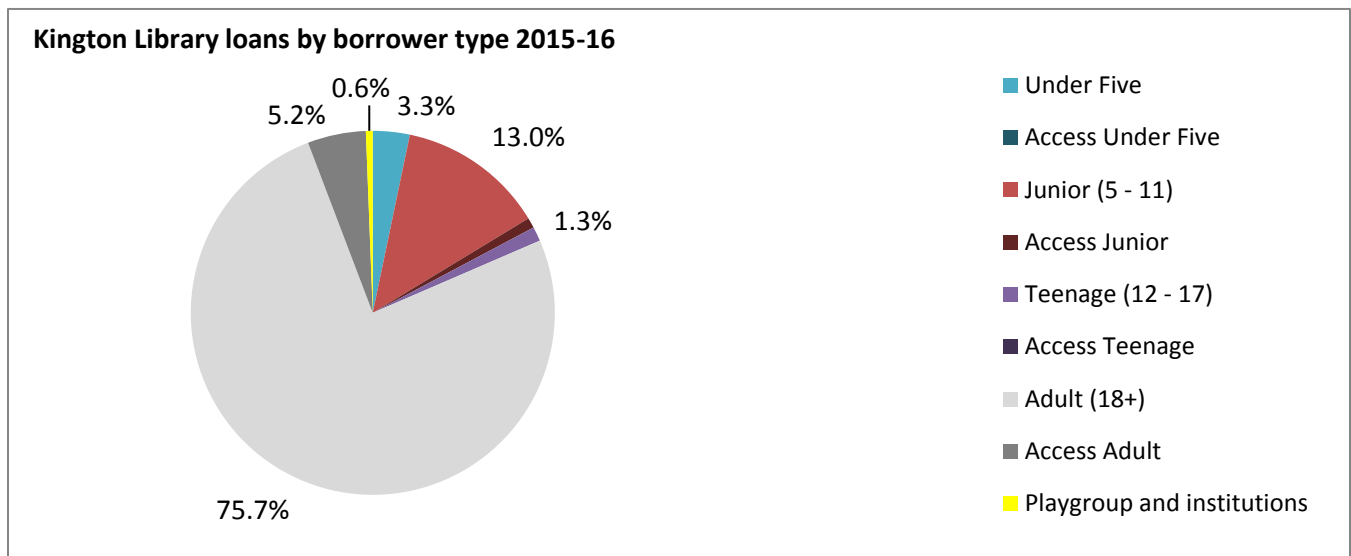
Library	Hours open per week (2016)	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Belmont	38	34,697	22	45,877	4,084	2	2,105	1,031
<i>Belmont 2014-15</i>	<i>22.5</i>	<i>22,527</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>26,100</i>	<i>2,390</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1,028</i>	<i>849</i>



Kington Library

In May 2015 Kington Library became part of the Kington Wellbeing Centre. The profiles shown, which date from before this development, show heavy usage by children and older customers. Over sixties borrowed most books with a dramatic peak between ages 65 - 70. Kington Library also includes Herefordshire Council Customer Services and other services.

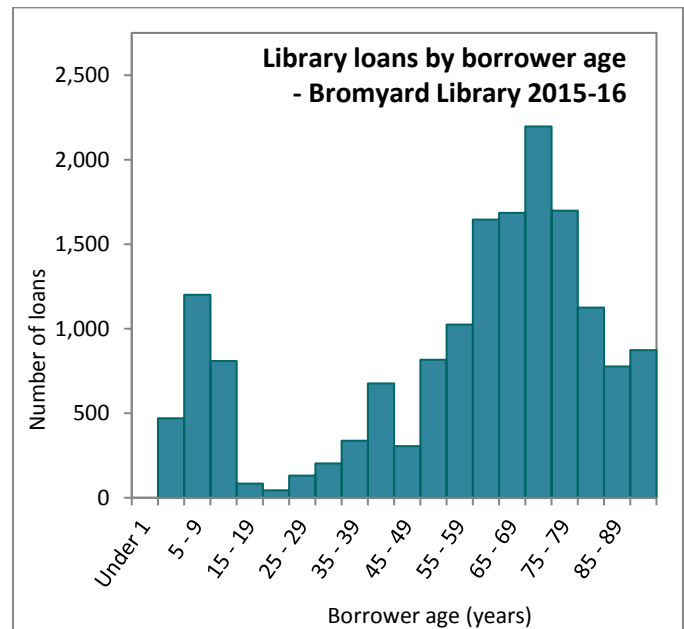
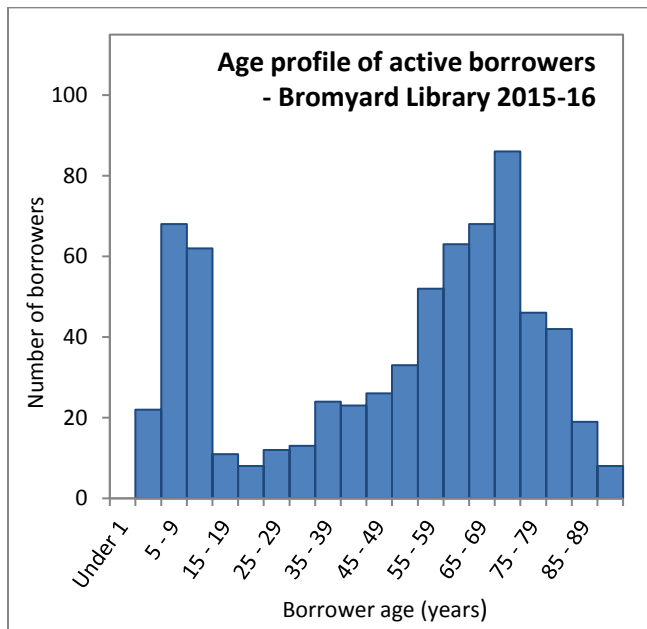
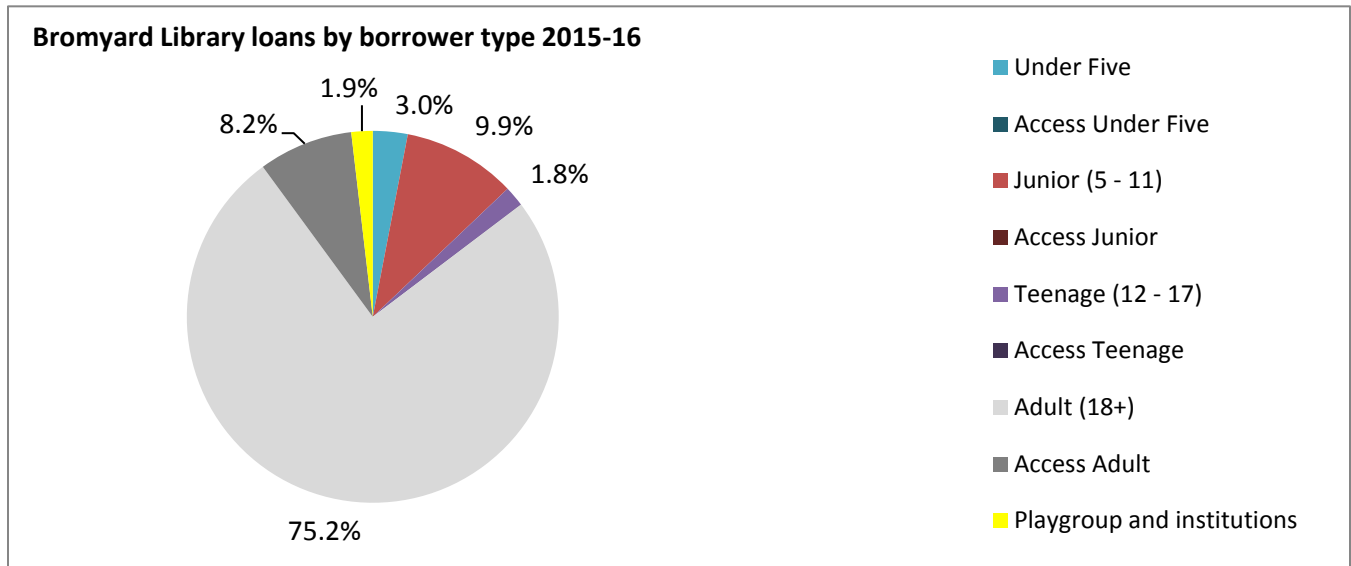
Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Kington	18.0	20,769	22	17,037	1,880	7	2,265	3,302



Bromyard Library

Bromyard Library is co-located with Halo Leisure in the Bromyard Centre. Bromyard Library also includes Herefordshire Council Customer Services.

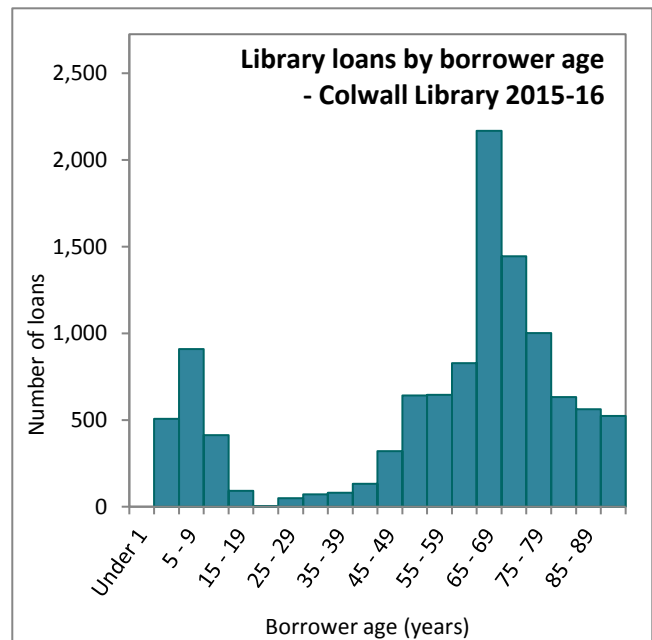
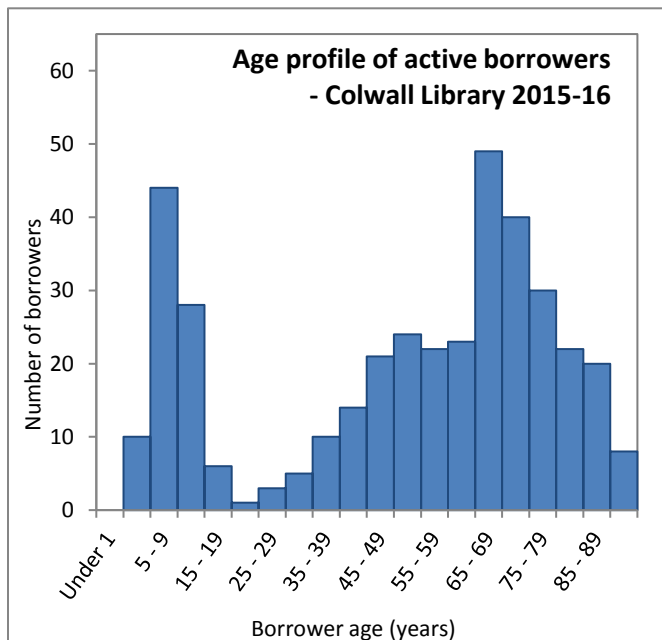
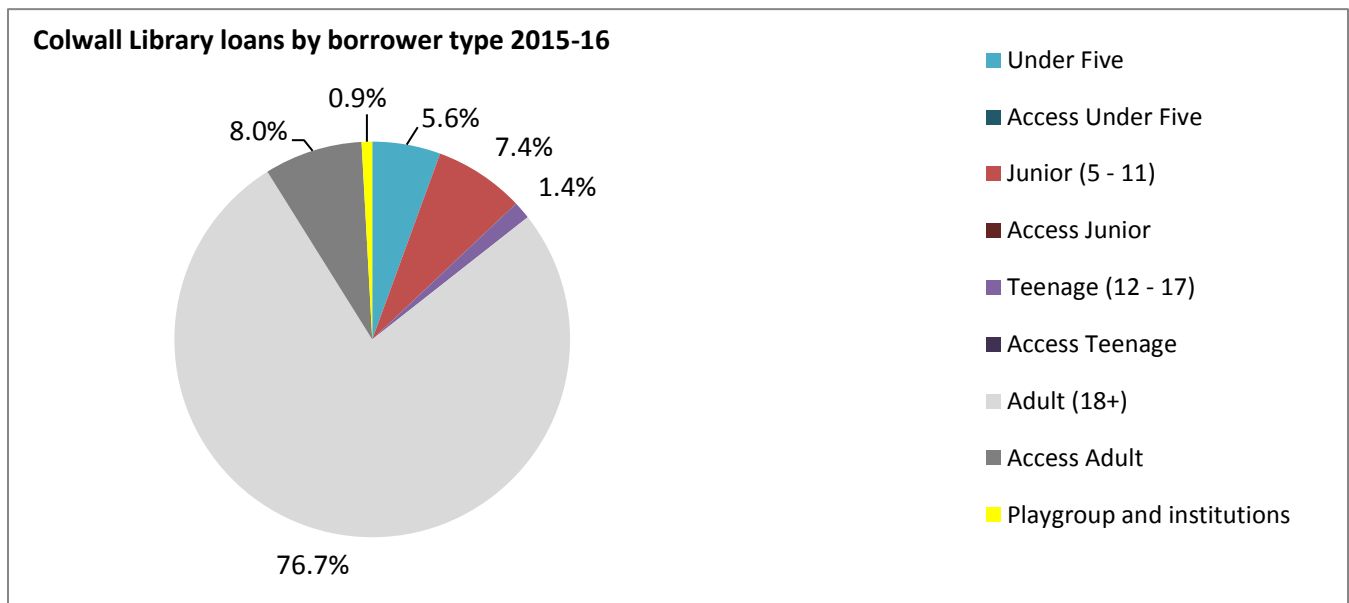
Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Bromyard	26.1	12,448	9	17,560	1,769	7	2,114	1,459



Colwall Library

Colwall Library is a Community Library run through a partnership between the local community and Herefordshire Council. The village has a higher proportion of older residents than the county average and this is reflected in the library usage.

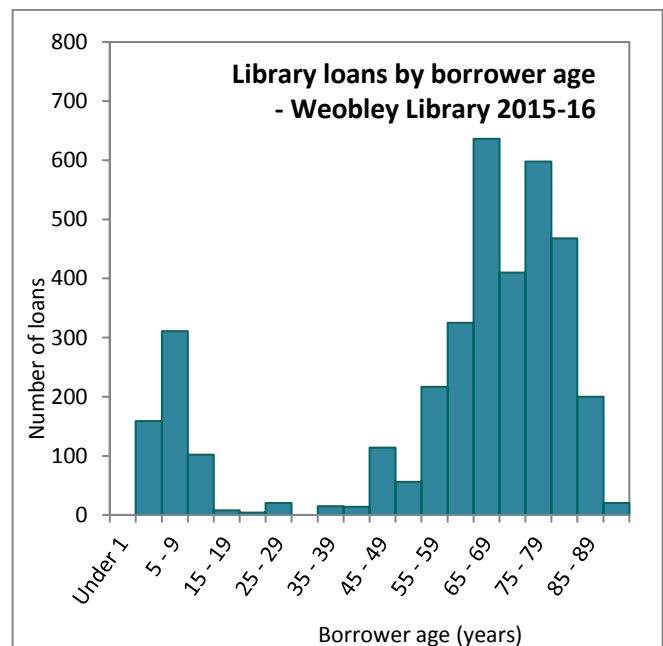
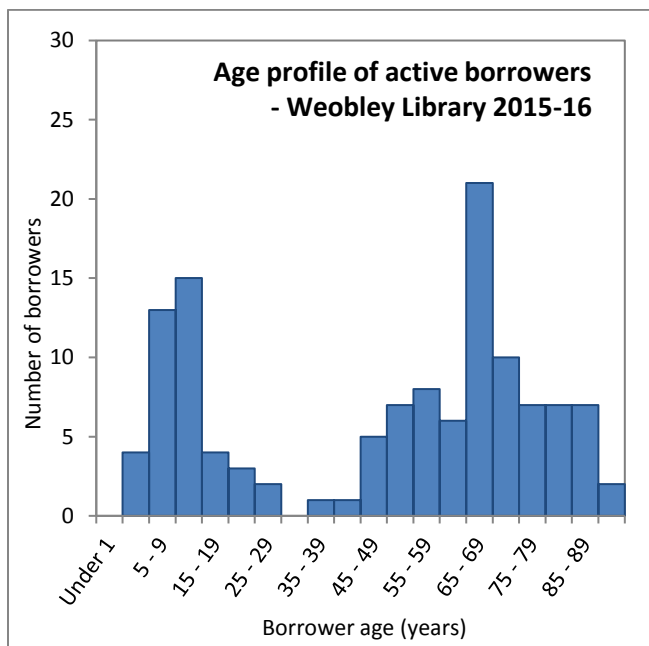
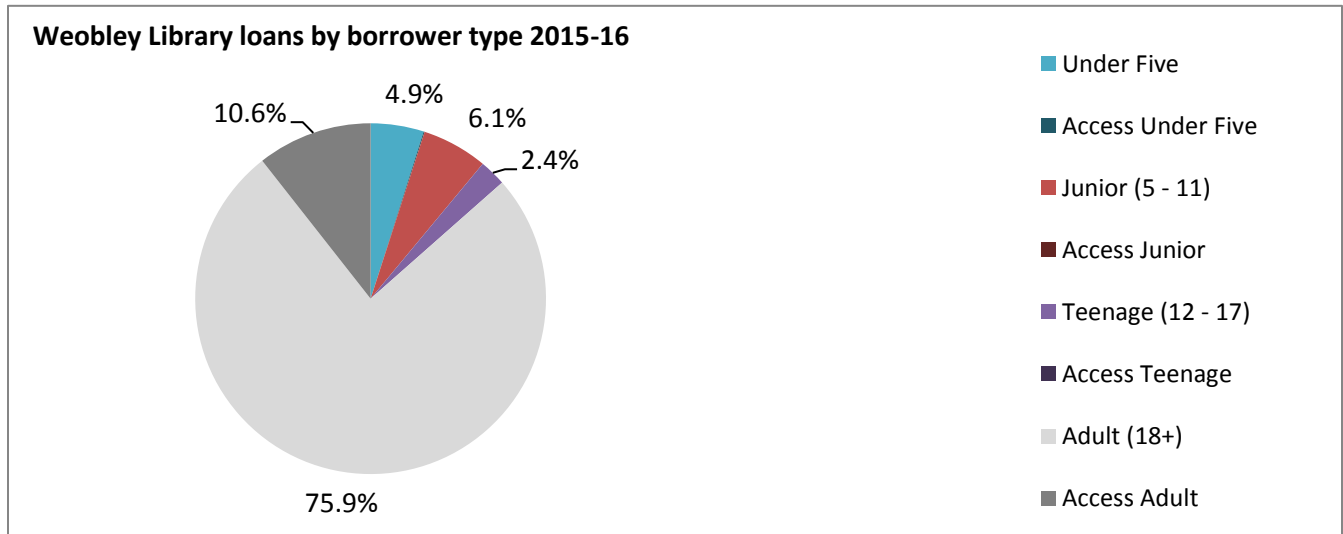
Library	Hours open per week (2016)	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Colwall	15.5	11,138	15	13,241	1,482	5	1,324	1,194



Weobley Library

Weobley Library is a Community Library where the frontline service is delivered by volunteers supported by Herefordshire Library Service. The library has a similar borrower profile to larger sites and is well used by children and older people.

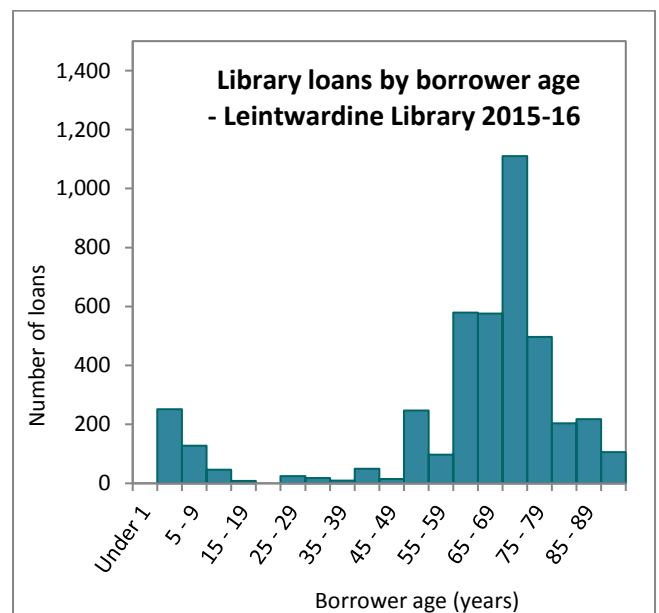
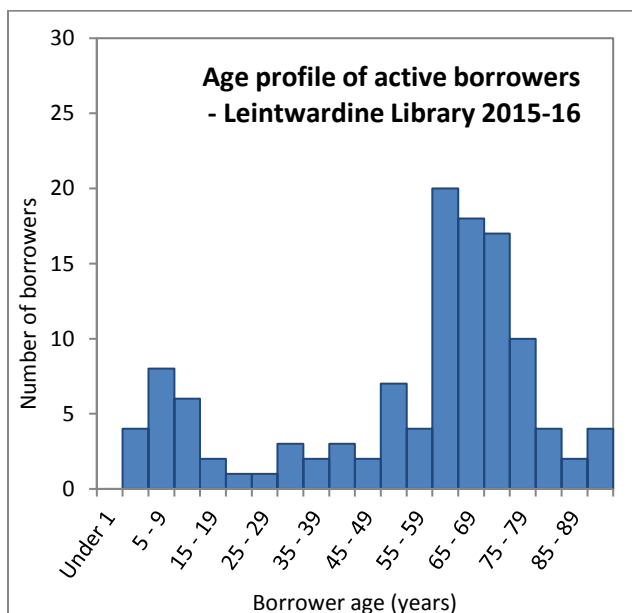
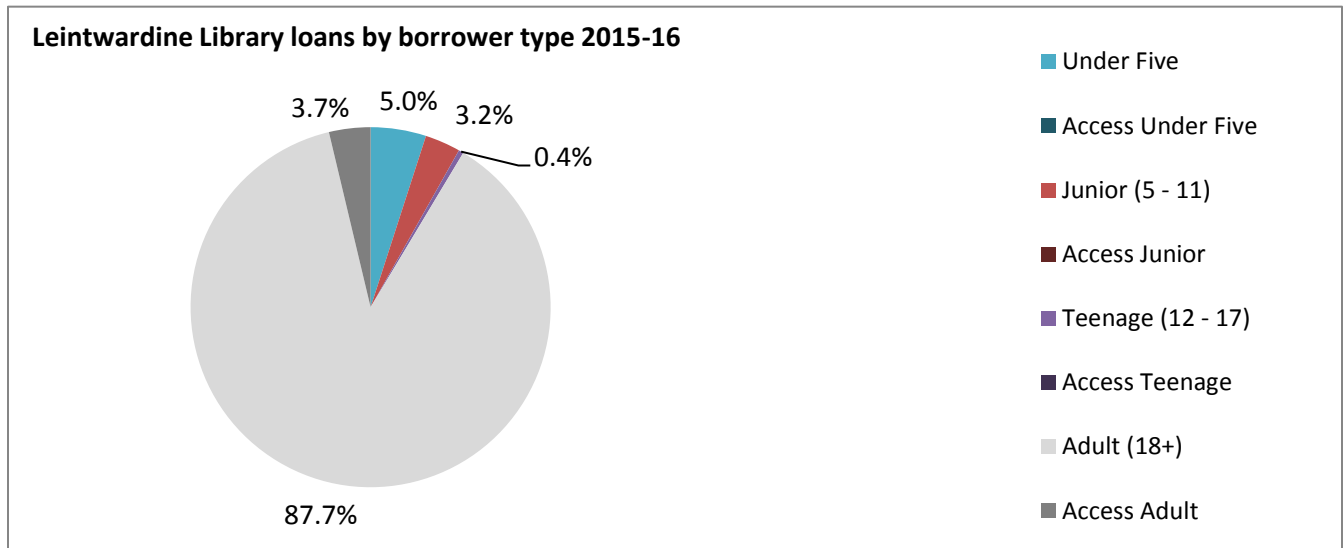
Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Weobley	6.0	2,491	8	4,454	482	3	152	355



Leintwardine Library

Leintwardine Library is a Community Library where the frontline service is delivered by volunteers supported by Herefordshire Library Service. There are fewer loans to children and young adults compared to larger sites, but significant usage by older age groups.

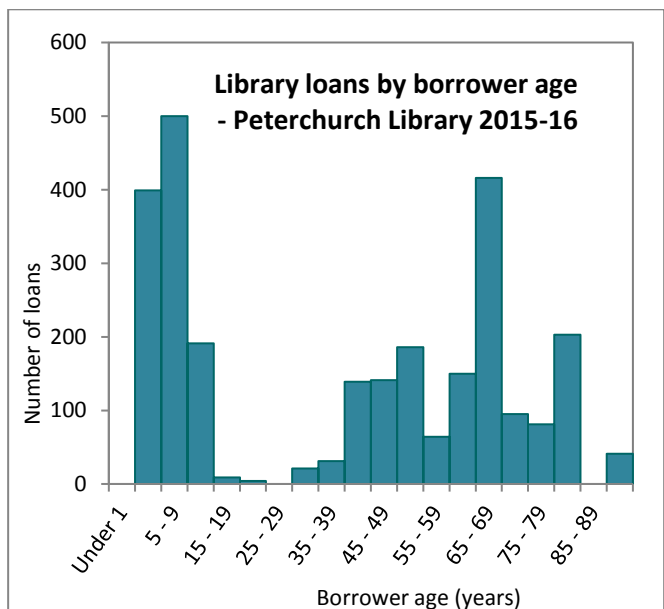
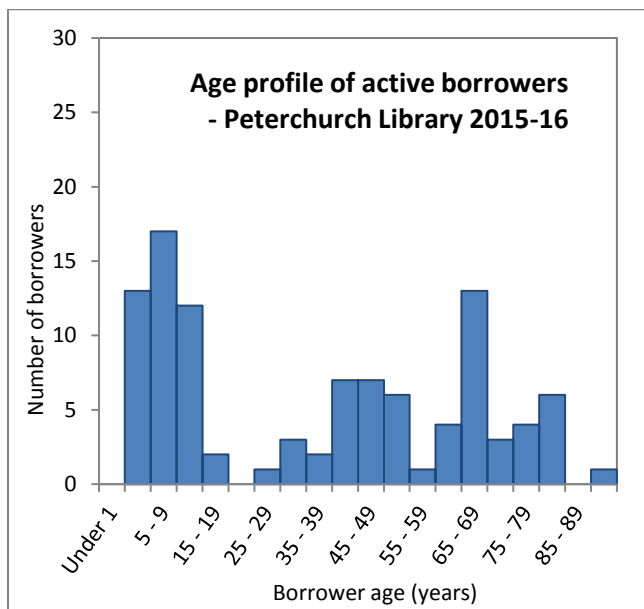
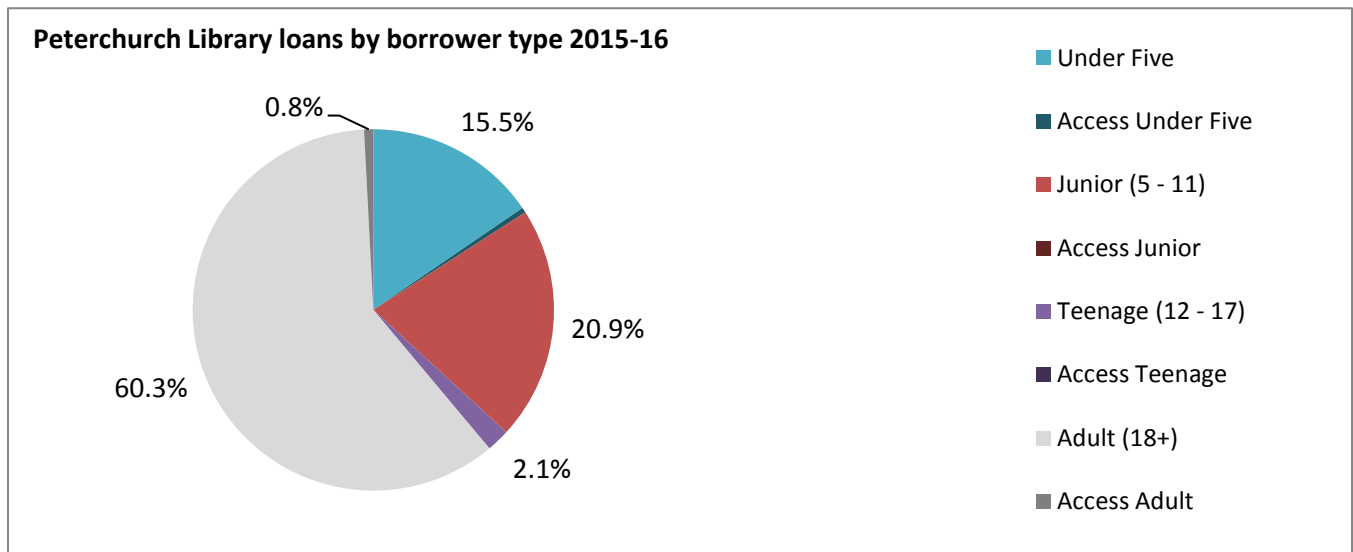
Library	Current Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Leintwardine	9.5	2,769	7	5,183	563	1	77	49



Peterchurch Library

Peterchurch Library is a Community Library where the frontline service is delivered by volunteers supported by Herefordshire Library Service. Although it is Herefordshire’s smallest library, the user profile shows it serves all age groups, with a particular emphasis on children’s borrowing.

Peterchurch Library	Hours open per week	Visits per year	Visits per hour	Loans per year	Items reserved per year	No. of public computers	Computer sessions per year	Computer hours per year
Peterchurch	10.0	1,890	4	3,108	429	0	n/a	n/a



Part 2: Customer Services market towns – Overview, Facts and Figures 2016

Herefordshire Council has five combined customer service and library sites located in the market towns. These include the Kington Library and Wellbeing Centre, Leominster Library and Customer Services, Bromyard Library and Customer Services, Ross-on-Wye Library and Customer Services and Ledbury Library and Customer Services. The teams at these sites provide both the front facing library service and Herefordshire Council customer service functions. This report focuses on the Customer Services aspects at the market town sites as a compliment to the Facts and Figures report for Herefordshire Libraries.

Customers can access a range of services under one roof meaning that they don't have to visit several locations. They also have public computers and free Wi-Fi, providing access to online services. Each site is unique with varying opening times; some are co-located with other organisations such as Department of Work and Pensions and they also offer a range of other services and facilities.

The market town Customer Service centres receive approximately 33% of Herefordshire Council's customer front-facing contact.

Customer Service Centres	Hours open per week	Face to Face enquiries	Payments	Total
Leominster	35.5	6,764	4,721	11,485
Ross-on-Wye	35.5	5,529	2,378	7,907
Ledbury	32.5	2,422	2,683	5,105
Kington	18	478	1,823	2,301
Bromyard	24	1,588	1,609	3,197
Total		16,781	13,214	29,005

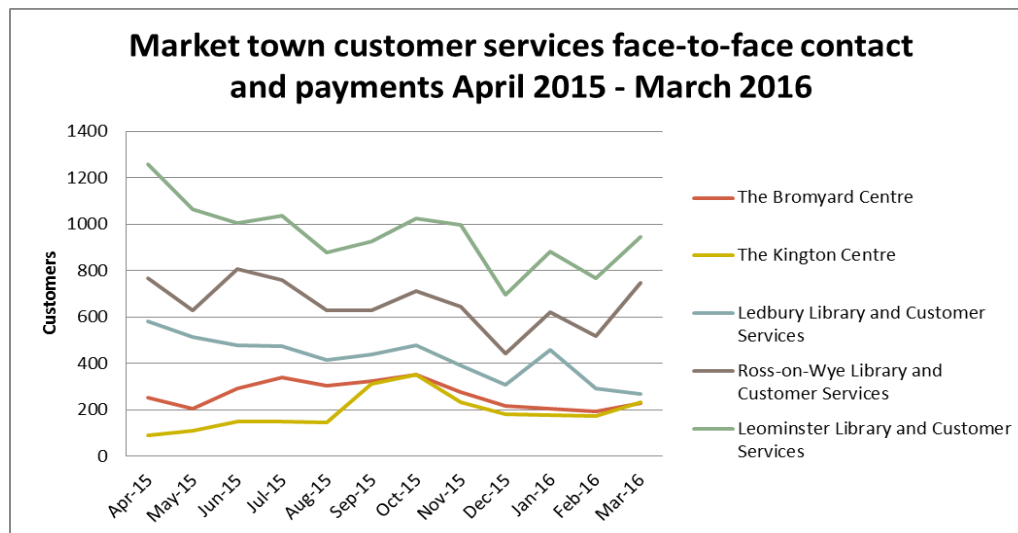
Table 1: Customer front-facing visits to market town customer service sites financial year 2015-16

Table 1 shows a breakdown of customer service contact in the market towns focusing on face-to-face enquiries and payments taken. Enquiries relating to blue badge, council tax and benefits can be lengthy enquiries and a new housing benefit and council tax reduction applications can, depending on the customers circumstances take up to an hour, whilst a payment can be a quick transaction taking a couple of minutes.

Customer services cover a wide range of enquiries most notably the below:

- Blue badge applications and renewals
- Building control
- Council tax and business rates
- Environmental health and trading standards
- Housing benefit
- Licensing
- Parking permits and parking ticket appeals
- Payments for council services

- Planning application files
- Scanning information through to Homepoint
- Signposting to elections, registrars, healthy lifestyle trainers and social care
- Signposting to non-council services including DWP, Age UK, WISH, HMRC, housing associations, CAB etc.
- Transportation enquiries – school transport and public bus passes, railcards
- Waste and recycling enquires
- A wide range of information, leaflets, and general advice on all council services – includes Core Strategy and Local plan documents



Graph 1: Market town customer services face-to-face contact and payments taken April 2015 – March 2016

Graph 1 shows the market towns customer service performance from April 2015 – March 2016, the chart shows customer services busiest time of the year are April/March to coincide with council tax billing and the new financial year. December shows a dip in customers for all the sites and this is explained by the sites closing for a week over the Christmas period.

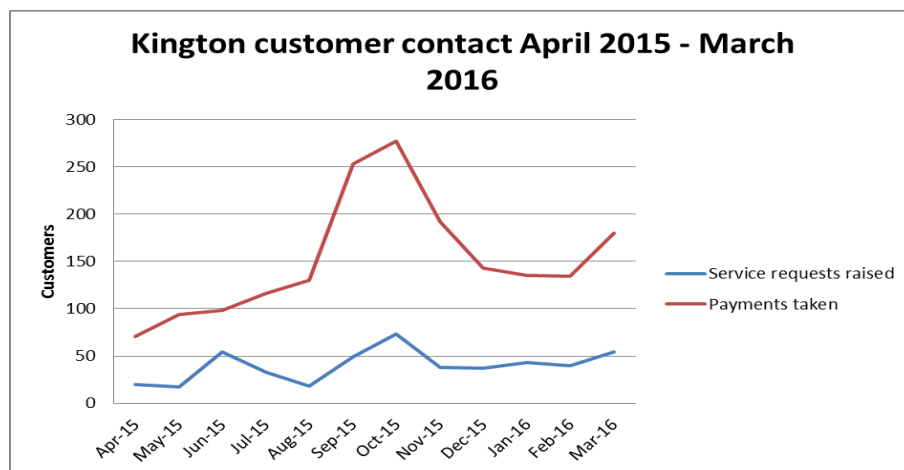
The Kington Centre

In March 2015 the Kington Centre underwent a refurbishment to accommodate well-being which was funded by Public Health to deliver a comprehensive Library, Customer Service and well-being service in its widest sense. The Kington Centre is open for a total of 24 hours per week delivering these services to the local community.

The centre works closely with internal and external partners - for example the Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Service, local organisations and groups within the community, bringing together all aspects of well-being under one roof.

The library and customer service centre houses a wide range of library books and media, and acts as a gateway to access books and other material from the whole county library. It also offers advice and support on all council services and signposting on all aspects of well-being.

Graph 2 shows the trend of customer contact at the Kington centre for April 2015 - March 2016. This shows a steady increase in both service requests and payments taken since the refurbishment.



Graph 2 Kington customer contact April 2015 – March 2016 requests raised and payments taken

Chart 1 shows where customers using customer services at The Kington Centre came from during the April 2015 – March 2015 period. Roughly 61% of customers are from Kington. Customers from HR3, the locality surrounding Kington are the second biggest users of The Kington Centre. 19.54% of customers did not provide address details when making their enquiry,

Kington customer services by postcode April 2015 - March 2016

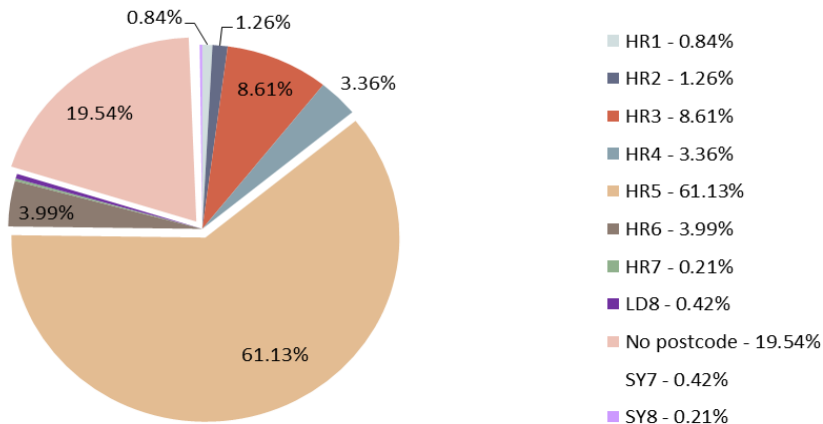


Chart 1 Kington customer by postcode April 2015 – March 2016

Chart 2 shows the types of requests our customers are enquiring about during the April 2015 – March 2016 period. 36% of customers want assistance with regards to benefits – this might include providing supporting evidence, bringing in completed forms or querying correspondence received. 31% of our customers are enquiring about transport; this could include making a bus pass application and making an enquiry about a bus timetables. 9% of our customers are visiting to apply for a blue badge and bring in documentation.

Kington customer services enquiry type April 2015 - March 2016

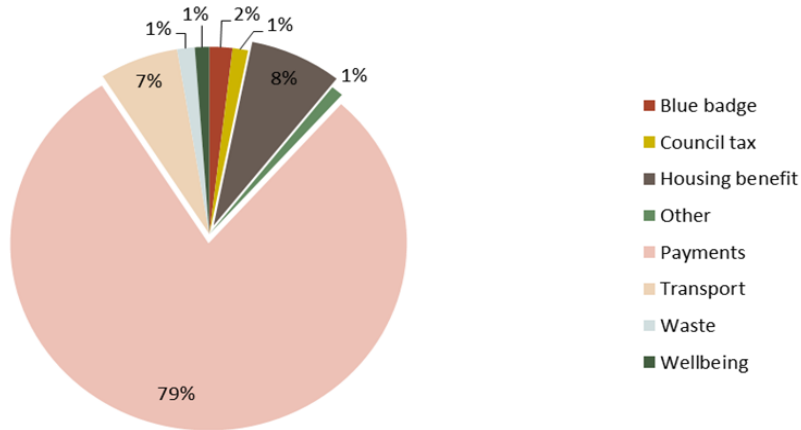


Chart 2 Kington customer services enquiry type April 2015 – March 2016

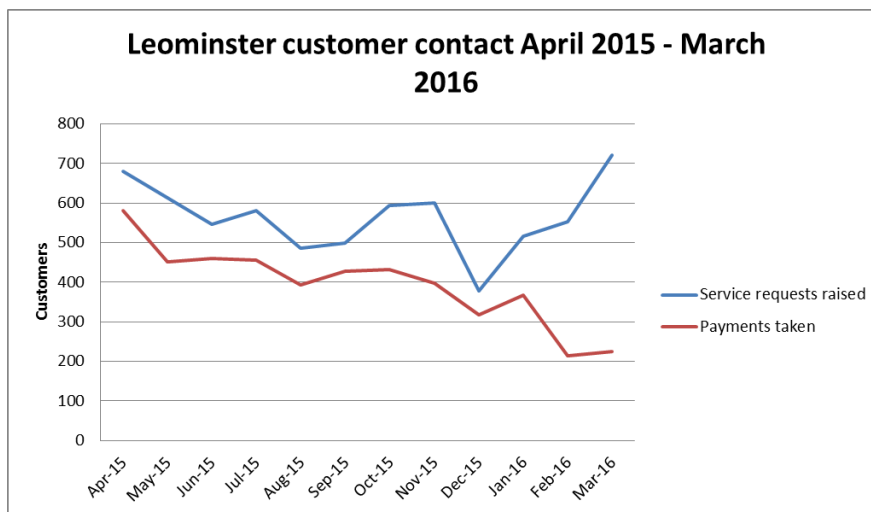
Leominster Library and Customer Services

Leominster Library and Customer Services is located within the north of the county, this site is open a total of 35.5 hours per week. Leominster Library and Customer Services offer a comprehensive library service with the option of the public using self-serve terminals to issue/discharge and manage their library account for themselves.

Leominster Library and Customer Services work closely with internal and external organisations, offering the Healthy Lifestyle Trainer service, a registrar service, WISH (Well-being Information Signposting Herefordshire) and many external services for example adult and child counselling services and offering a successful Early Hurly Burly early years music development session for the under 4's.

Several organisations run regular sessions in the exhibition space or rent the meeting rooms that are available.

Graph 3 for Leominster shows that during the period of April 2015 – March 2016 there was an increase in customers accessing customer services; however we have seen a decrease in customers coming to the site to make payments. This could be because we no longer take cash and customers have more ways to pay items like their council tax bills.



Graph 3 Leominster customer service contact April 2015 – March 2016

Chart 3 shows that from April 2015 – March 2016 around 74% of customers were from Leominster. The chart does show that the site does attract customers from outside Leominster (not including customers that didn't provide a postcode), approximately 14% of customers come from outside the Leominster postcode region.

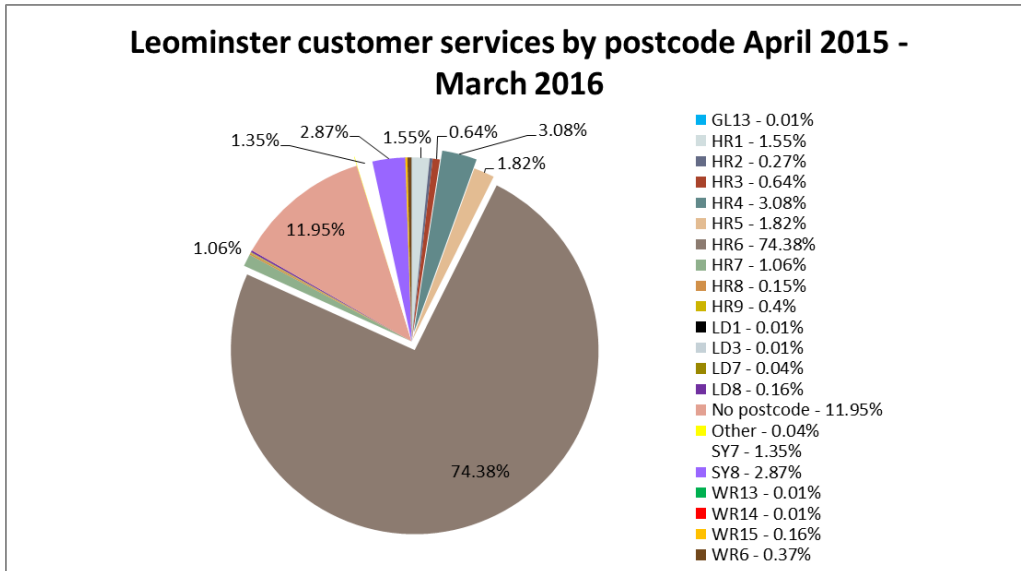


Chart 3 Leominster customers by postcode March 2015 – April 2016

Chart 4 for the April 2015 – March 2016 period shows that 41% of customers are making a payment; types of payments include council tax, overpayment of housing benefit, social care payments and for services such as licensing. 29% of customers are seeking advice on housing benefit and 10% with an enquiry about council tax. Enquiries relating to council tax may include supporting evidence, change of address, single person discount and queries relating to council tax bills.

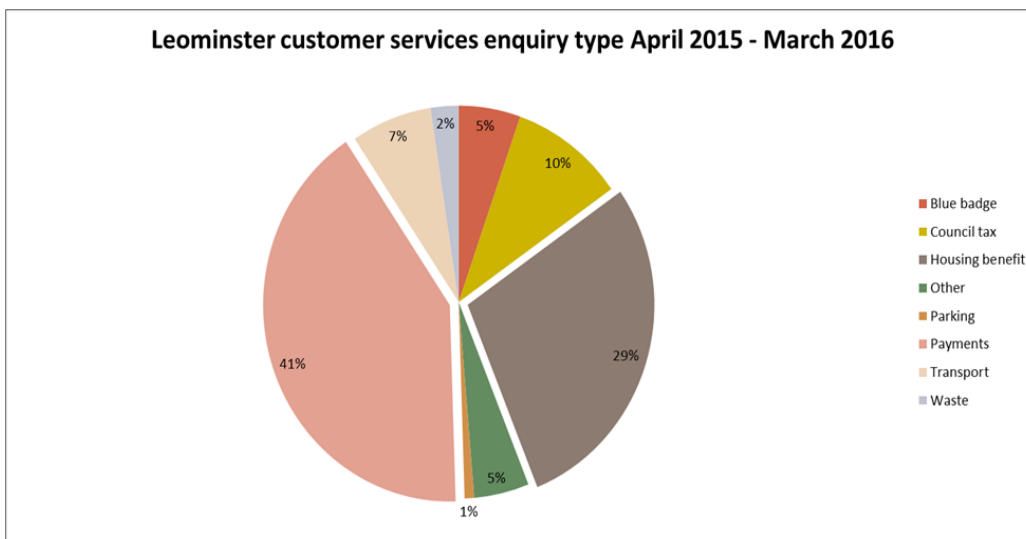


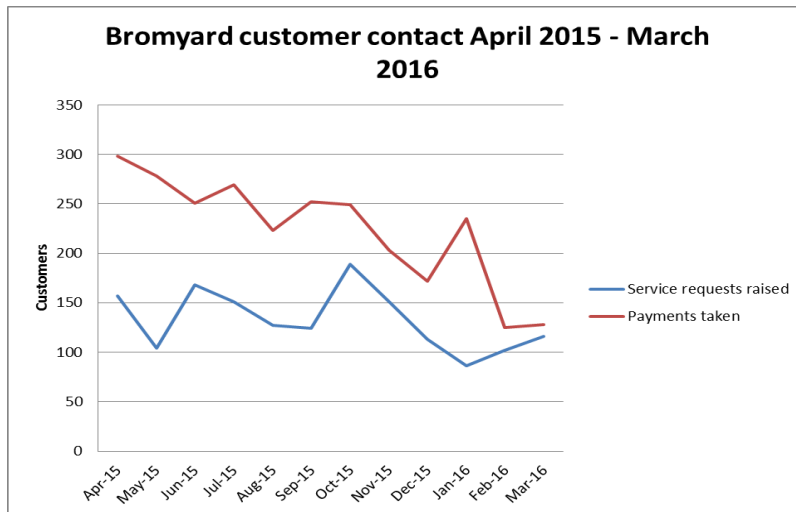
Chart 4 Leominster customer service enquiry type April 2015- March 2016

Bromyard Library and Customer Service Centre

The Bromyard Library and Customer Service Centre is located within the Halo Leisure Centre in Bromyard, the site delivers both a comprehensive library service and customer service offering a full range of council services. The Bromyard Centre is one of our smaller sites and is open 24 hours in total per week.

The local community are able to use the leisure facilities and also access both the library and customer services at one point of contact. Having these facilities under the same roof gives the local community the opportunity to access all aspects of well-being whether it is from books on prescription within the library, accessing council services, being signposted to organisations using WISH (Well-being Information Signposting Herefordshire) or using the Halo facilities available.

Graph 4 shows the level of contact at Bromyard customer services, payments have reduced at the site with the increased choice that customers have in making their council payments. The site has also had a refurbishment which could account for the fluctuating amount of customer contact at the site.



Graph 4 Bromyard customer service contact April 2015 – March 2016

Chart 5 over the period of April 2015 – March 2016 shows about 43% of customers come from HR7; this is the Bromyard locality, roughly 5.6% of customers come from WR6 which is on the county border of Worcester.

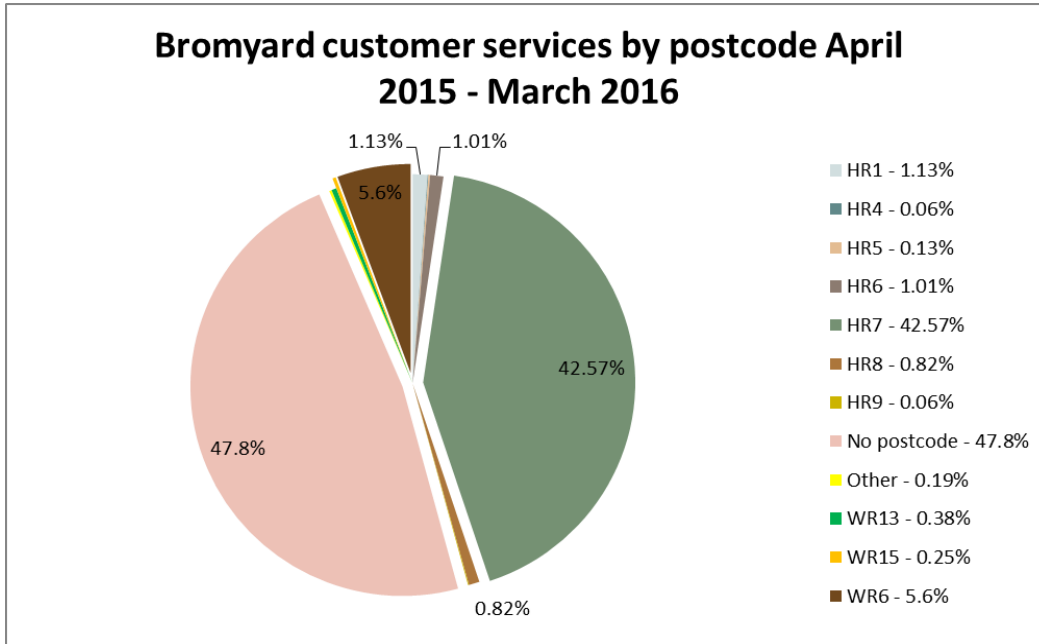


Chart 5 Bromyard customer by postcode March 2015 – April 2016

Chart 6 during the period of April 2015 – March 2016 shows that around 50% of customers are making a payment and roughly 15% of customers have a general enquiry. A general enquiry might relate to details about a council service, opening times or even council led initiatives. Housing benefit and council tax enquiries total to approximately 15%, these enquiries can be lengthy taking more time than most other enquiry types.

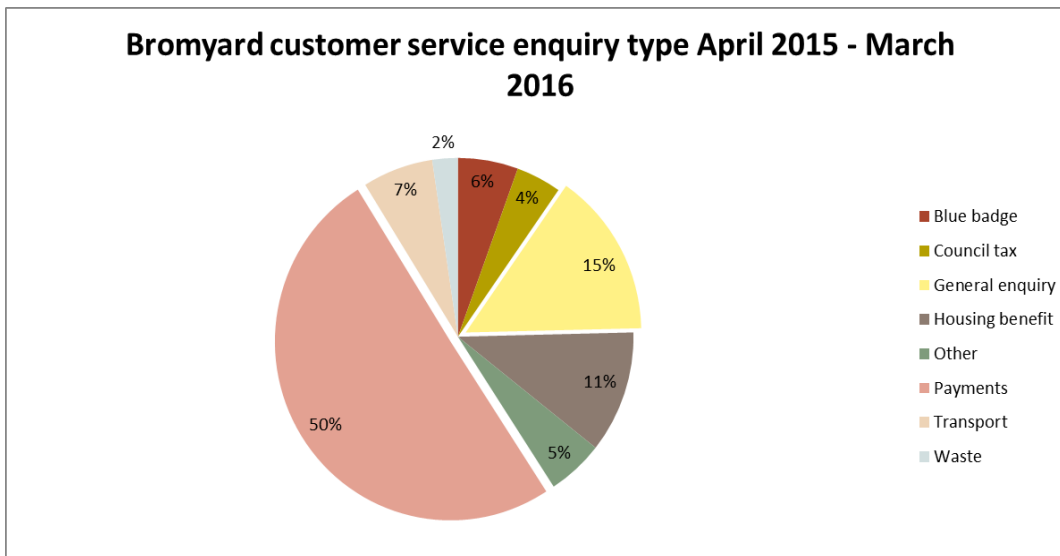


Chart 6 Bromyard customer service enquiry type April 2015- March 2016

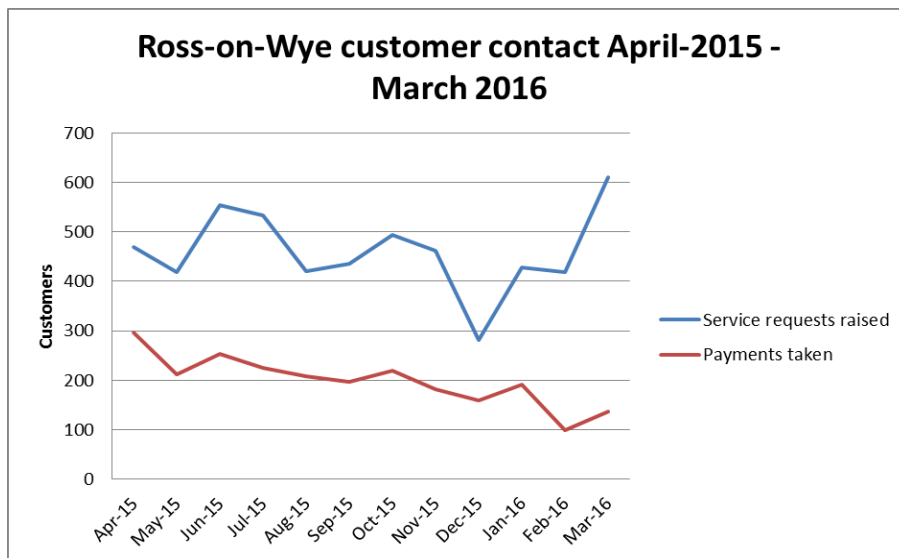
Ross Library and Customer Services

Ross Library and Customer Services are located within the south of the county. The site is open a total of 35.5 hours in total per week. The site offers a comprehensive Library and Customer Services and what is unique to this site is the Job Centre Plus for the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) being located within the building.

Having the Job Centre Plus in the same location is a positive for the community accessing those services, there is a sharing of customers who also access customer services, the library service and Job Centre customers using the public access PCs for their job search. Ross Library and Customer Services have also provided work experience for Job Centre Plus customers, enhancing their work experience and helping in their search for employment. Currently with the rollout of Universal Credit there is a sharing of knowledge between Job Centre Plus staff and Ross Library and Customer Services staff.

Ross Library and Customer Services works closely with internal and external partners and meeting room space is hired by a range of organisations including HMRC, WISH (Well-being Information Signposting Herefordshire), Healthy Lifestyle Trainer Services are to name but a few. The Registration Services provides their service from the site twice a week as well as other internal services utilising the space.

Graph 5 during the period of April 2015 – March 2016 shows that Ross-on-Wye had an increase in enquiries particularly during the March period; this may be due to council tax billing. Similar to the other market town sites there is the trend in a decrease in payments made by customers.



Graph 5 Ross-on-Wye customer service contact April 2015 – March 2016

Chart 7 over the time of April 2015 – March 2016 shows around 86% of customers accessing the service are from the Ross-on-Wye area, whilst about 2.51% come from HR2 – South Hereford.

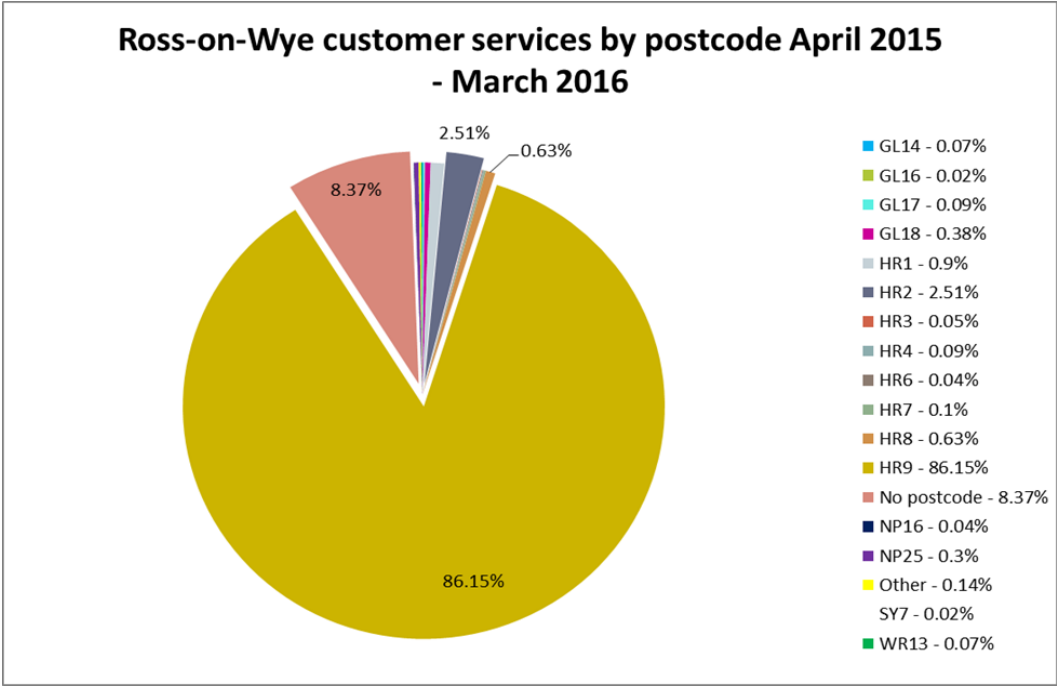


Chart 7 Ross-on-Wye

customer by postcode March 2015 – April 2016

Chart 8 for the April 2015 – March 2016 period shows that there is a full range of council services being accessed by customers at Ross-on-Wye. The majority of customers are either making payments - 30%, accessing housing benefits services - 29%, council tax 10%, transportation enquiries - 9%, and blue badge – 8%.

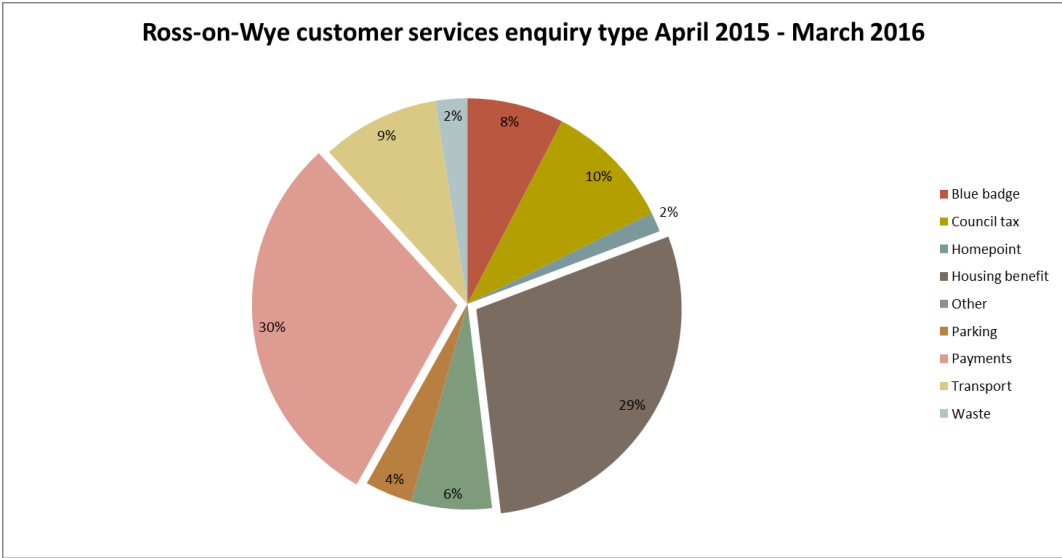


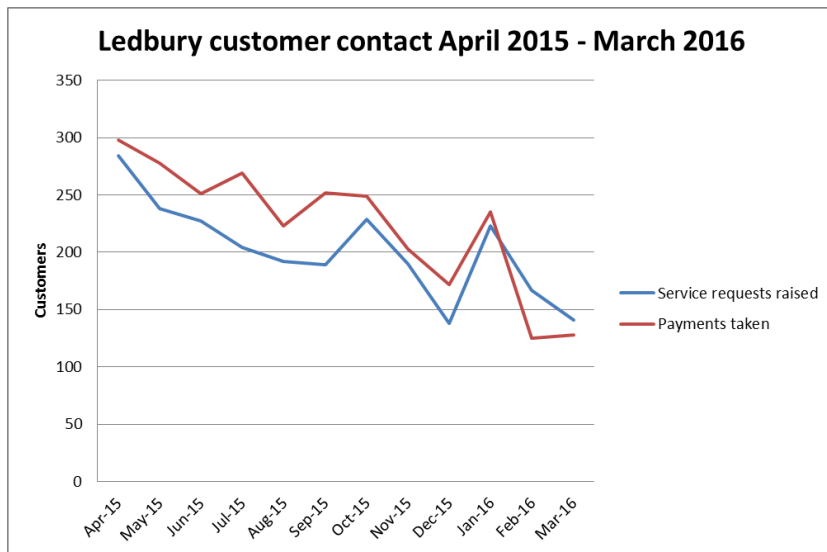
Chart 8 Ross-on-Wye customer service enquiry type April 2015- March 2016

Ledbury Library and Customer Services

Ledbury Library and Customer Services are located within the medieval restored award winning building of The Master’s House. The library and customer services part of the site is open a total of 32.5 hours per week. The services this site offers are unique as it brings together heritage, culture, voluntary services, as well as library and customer services. Partner organisations include Age UK, Ledbury Poetry Festival, John Masefield Society Archive and office space for the Victoria County History. Different departments within the council are also co-located within the building, making it a multi-functional space. The customer service team also sell local theatre tickets on behalf of the Market Theatre in Ledbury and for the events organised by the Heritage Coordinator, Library services and the site Friends groups.

Customers access advice on housing benefit, council tax and blue badges through an appointments system available from 9.30am – 1pm, whilst other customer service enquiries and payments are available on a drop in basis throughout the day.

Meeting room and exhibition space is hired by a range of organisations including WISH (Well-being Information Signposting Herefordshire), Active Here, Age UK and has been used by a local recruitment company to name but a few.



Graph 6 Ledbury customer contact April 2015 - March 2016

Graph 6 shows the period April 2015 – March 2016 and there is similar trend with the reduction in payments due to the increased options of payment methods for customers. Ledbury operates an appointments system for customers that are available between 9.30am – 1pm, the fluctuation of enquiries made could be a result of the introduction of an appointments system

Chart 9 for April 2015 – March 2016 shows that approximately 50% of customers come from the HR8 region which is the Ledbury locality, around 23% in total come from HR9 and WR13. This shows that catchment area that Ledbury covers.

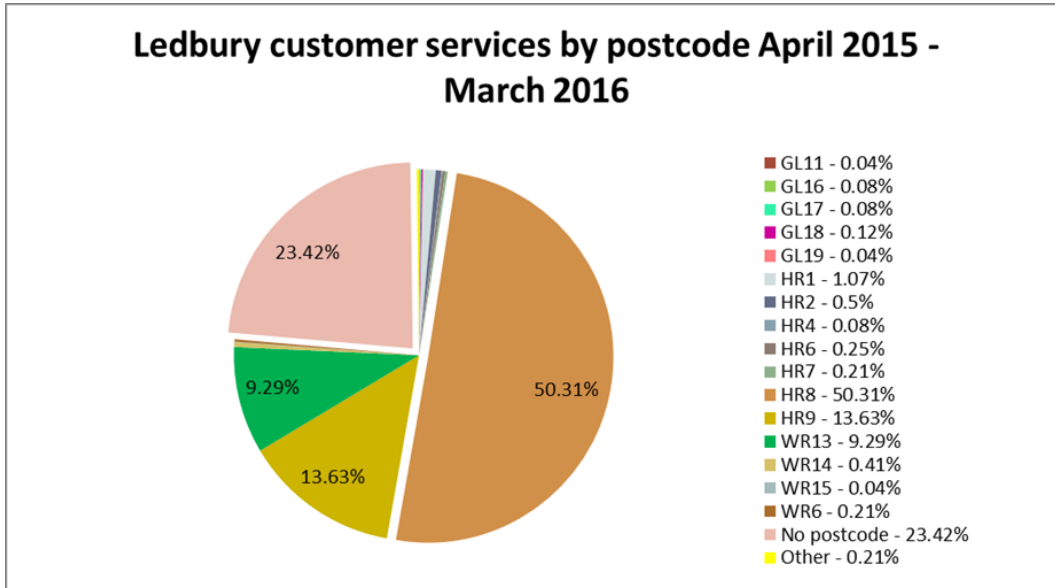


Chart 9 Ledbury customer by postcode March 2015 – April 2016

Chart 10 for April 2015 – March 2016 shows that approximately 53% of customers are making a payment at the Ledbury. Around 16% of customers are accessing a full range of council services.

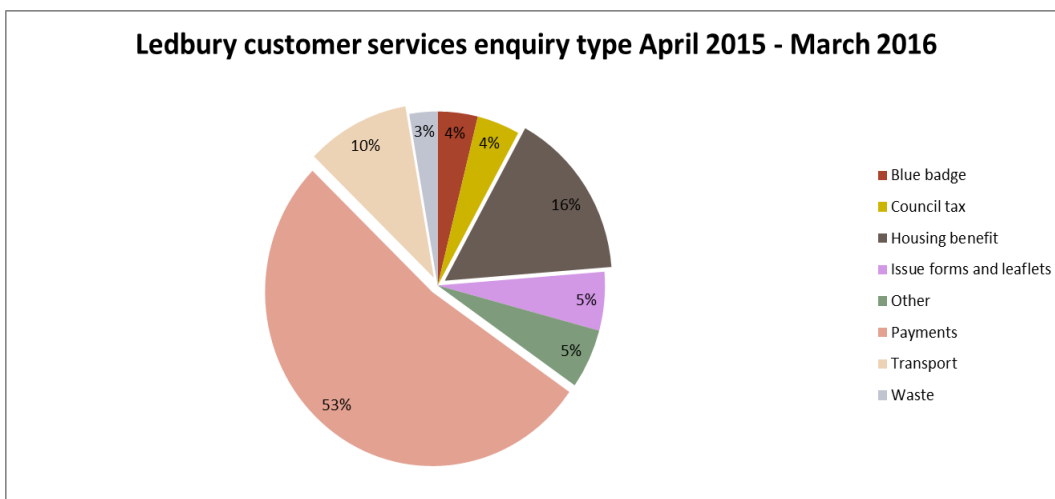


Chart 10 Ledbury customer service enquiry type April 2015 - March 2016

