

It's been another busy few months for our libraries. Here is a summary of July to December 2024

Supporting communities – people and place

- over 222,000 visits were made across South Gloucestershire libraries between July-December 2024
- our friendly, knowledgeable staff members answered over 40,000 enquiries on a wide range of subjects.
- All of our libraries provide or host regular groups for adults from reading groups crafting to knitting to coffee mornings. They all offer a warm welcome and free tea and coffee.
- Our children's activities are not just a fun and free sessions but help them learn to socialise and enjoy books while enabling parents to meet other parents, providing an invaluable support network.
- In December Hanham Library converted into Santa's Grotto to host Hanham Parish Council's Christmas Fayre with 350 people coming in to see Father Christmas. Staple Hill Library stayed opened longer hours as part of Christmas on The Hill, while Winterbourne Library hosted an event for people to learn about making their homes more environmentally friendly.

"Thank you for a wonderful 2024! You have been a staple in our lives this year and have always been so kind with each visit. Looking forward to Rhyme Time in 2025. "

(Christmas message from an Emersons Green Library family).

Health and wellbeing

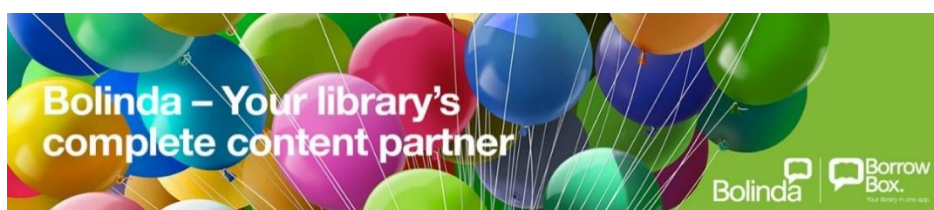
Our Libraries have continued to support public health campaigns with books displays about stopping smoking, men's health and relationship support.

- Our *Books on Prescription* offer continues - a range of books on topics such as Dementia and Teenage Mental Health – recommended by medical professionals.



Resources and support - learning, information and digital skills

- In Summer 2024 our new Library Management (Computer) System went live. This will provide a more attractive and intuitive system for staff and users, as well as make our book reservation system more efficient by avoiding stock having to travel so far to satisfy requests.
- Digital Champions are our volunteers who give free one-to-one support sessions to help those who need to feel more confident using the internet and online services such as the NHS App. We have Digital Champions in most of our libraries. Some libraries also host IT Classes for beginners or those looking to return to work.
- Borrow Box, our e-resources supplier, now includes more than 1100 magazine titles that are free to download each month as well as e-books, e-audio books and e-newspapers all from one app.
- In September we launched Wi-Fi print, making it easier for users to send documents direct to our printers.



Giving children the best start in life - children, young people and families

- **Summer Reading Challenge 2024**, *Marvellous Makers* was a huge success. **5700** children aged 4 -11 years in South Gloucestershire took part, helping maintain their reading over the summer holidays and were rewarded with lots of incentives, including those ever-popular smelly stickers! Parents continue to tell us how important this scheme is:

"This is a very great challenge and encourages the kids to read more. The staff were friendly and helpful."

"The 2024 Summer Reading Challenge is a life saver. We have had the opportunity to read books together as parent to our kids. They look forward to these moments and enjoy reading so much more."

"Great idea for the children. Both children love coming to the library. Gives me a chance to socialise with other mums!"

Councillor Sean Rhodes attended the Celebration Event at Bradley Stoke Library that marked the finale of the challenge in South Gloucestershire, awarding some of those who finished with their certificates.

- Each library also hosted a **Puppetry workshop**, all of which were "Sold Out", parents commented:

"Absolutely brilliant workshop" The activity was explained and accessible. Eleanor was positive and enthusiastic whilst also being in control of the room. My children were completely engaged. Thank you for producing such a wonderful event!"

"Really fun and inspiring. Loved making the puppet. I'm sure we'll be making more! Loved the 'professional' puppets too- so brilliant."

- **Concorde Book Award**, our annual ceremony of shortlisted books nominated by children and young people aged 11-14 in South Gloucestershire as great reads took place at Emersons Green Science Park. Young People voted for their favourite book and several of the shortlisted authors attended and answered questions from the audience.

Reading, literacy and culture

- The 4 year **My Library Card** initiative completed a third year, giving all school children in reception and year 6 their own personalised library cards. We aim to address the attainment gap and ensure all children have access to the benefits of free reading materials and library services. Poet Laureate of Wales Alex Wharton visited Cadbury Heath and Emersons Green libraries to entertain these pupils with his poems and encourage them to use libraries.
- **Family Theatre @ Yate Library** is a collaboration with leading theatre companies, bringing high quality, inclusive theatre shows open to children, young people and families from across South Gloucestershire and funded by a grant from the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Our 2024 Autumn program included Sold Out shows of *The Snow Mouse*, direct from the Egg Theatre at Bath Theatre Royal.
- Alongside this project we expanded our theatre offer to local schools with **Little Red Riding Could**, which visited four other libraries. This was performed by the Roustabout, the award-winning Bristol based theatre company. The reactions of teachers who attended included these comments:

*"This linked really well to the **work we are doing in school on diversity, equity and inclusion.**"*

*"Great message about expectations **This is something we talk about in PSHE.**"*

*"**Engaging and thought provoking but at an age-appropriate level, allowing the children to question gender roles, really fantastic message to do what you love, enjoy most and to follow your own path.**"*



From 4 November 2024, the number of staffed hours were reduced however our libraries have remained open on the same days as they were. The staffed opening hours for each library were selected following a twelve-week public consultation, to ensure libraries remain as accessible as possible to the community, while helping to meet the ongoing budgetary constraints faced by the council.

Coming soon

- The newly extended Children's Area at Emersons Green Library will be opening in March 2025.

South Gloucestershire Libraries: the space where people, communities & ideas grow

www.southglos.gov.uk/libraries