Libraries Unlimited

Enriching Lives
Building Communities

Libraries Unlimited

We are a charity:

Enriching Lives, Building Communities

Founded in 2016, Libraries Unlimited runs public libraries across Devon and Torbay, and delivers a year-round programme of cultural events and activities, support for local businesses and entrepreneurs, wellbeing initiatives and educational provision.

In less than seven years we've brought ideas, imagination, knowledge and creativity to more than 97,000 people.

Whilst we are proud of our achievements, our community faces growing challenges that cannot be ignored. Despite our stunning landscape and flourishing tourism industry, our region remains vulnerable – with high levels of deprivation, low attainment levels and poor wellbeing outcomes that have all been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

With a multitude of issues that urgently need addressing, we know we can and must do more to support our local communities.

54 libraries
1.5 million visits

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Be part of our story

Whilst our core library services are funded by Devon and Torbay Council, as an independent charity we are completely reliant on public support in order to deliver our year-round provision.

With the growing challenges faced by the people of Devon and Torbay, our services are absolutely vital to addressing this urgent need.

To truly make a difference, we need to raise £1 million over the next three years.

With support from trusts, corporate partners, individual donors and local supporters, we can make a huge step-change in the way we operate, creating a new model that will turn our libraries into essential community hubs all year-round.

We believe in the unlimited potential of Libraries Unlimited to make a transformational change – do you?

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Business Benefits

Support your community

- We will work with you to develop bespoke packages in the community where you want to make an impact.

- Enhance your brand and build your reputation as a socially responsible company

- A chance to make a positive impact addressing many of the needs across the County

- Generate positive PR opportunities at a local and county level

- Develop employee satisfaction

- Staff volunteering programme

Advertising

Staff development

Sponsorship

PR opportunities

Volunteering

Events

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Reaching far and wide

We have one of the widest geographical and demographic reach of any Devon charity.

115,000 library members

1.5 million visits per year

5000 events per year

17,000 subscribers to our eNewsletter

32,000 website users per month

11,500 social media followers

2 million viewing our press coverage per quarter

115,000+ PC access sessions per year

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Why our work is needed

Attainment levels are worsening:

In 2022, only 55% of all Key Stage 2 pupils in Devon reached the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, down from 64% in 2019.

Social inequalities are rising:

40,000 children in Devon are living in poverty.

Torridge, North Devon, Teignbridge and West Devon have among the lowest earnings in the UK.

The housing affordability ratio in Devon is lower than the national average.

Challenges around loneliness and isolation are increasing:

It is currently estimated that around 5-6 young people in every class now have one or more mental health problems.

Almost 25% of people in Devon reported feeling lonely always, or some of the time during a survey done by the ONS during the Covid-19 pandemic.

What we do

Projects that support children & young people

to build the skills and confidence needed to raise their aspirations and attainment levels.

38,500 children are members of our libraries, loaning around

650,000 books per year.

6000 children are signed up to our unique Secret Book Quest: participants borrow, on average, 3 times as many books as other children.

10,000 children across Devon take part in the Summer Reading Challenge every year to encourage learning throughout the long Summer holiday break from school.

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Barbara's Story

A weekly Walk and Talk group at Torrington Library helped Barbara get over a period of anxiety and depression, and settle in her new hometown.

"I saw an article about the group in the Torrington Crier. I'd found lockdown extremely hard. It was a long-awaited dream to come to Devon, but not being able to go out and meet people was difficult. I actually started to get anxious about going out, which wasn't like me at all, and was being treated for high blood pressure and a back problem."

"I've really enjoyed the walks and made some nice friends. It gets me out, it gets me walking, you're with like-minded people and even if you're feeling a bit anxious or maybe have some physical problems, you know you're safe and everyone is there to support you."

Maureen's Story

Like many people made redundant from a longheld job, Maureen Wood had lost confidence.

Aged 60, she had worked in her factory job for 9 years. Applying for a new job after so many years, particularly with the new demands of digital applications, felt like an overwhelming task.

The Work Club at Barnstaple Library set about boosting Maureen's confidence and helping her back into work over several months.

Maureen secured a part time cleaning job at a holiday camp – not her first choice, but she recognised the importance of being in work, and eventually grew to enjoy it. It also allowed her the time to visit the Work Club to develop her CV, fill out applications and practice interview techniques.

In November 2020 Maureen's efforts were rewarded. The local Coronavirus Testing Centre offered her full-time job, which will run until at least September 2021. Maureen said: "I'm so grateful to Work Club. I absolutely love this job, and I wouldn't have got it without you."

Ethan's Story

Five-year-old Ethan's reading came on in leaps and bounds with the Summer Reading Challenge, so much so that his reluctance to do school reading homework saw a dramatic turnaround.

His Mum Hannah said: "Ethan loves listening to stories, but it was a battle to get him to do his phonics home learning when the school was closed and when school re-opened, he would do anything to avoid reading books sent home from school. He always had a reason why he couldn't do his reading homework - a headache, too tired, "feeling listen-ish not read-ish"!

We signed Ethan up too, not really expecting much. But the thought of earning stickers and completing a challenge somehow caused a transformation in Ethan.

Projects that boost the local economy

and support enterprise by helping local businesses flourish and boost the skills of creatives, freelancers and entrepreneurs across the region.

1000 hours per year of day-to-day support in using IT equipment, printing, scanning, completing online forms and setting up email accounts.

Every library provides free access to a variety of material ranging from books, eBooks and audiobooks, business support, children's events, author events and book groups, free WiFi and computer access and information and resources.

600 people are supported into work and training every year through our seven work clubs.

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Projects that improve the health and wellbeing of communities

Our libraries have a growing number of community fridges, we provide free winter clothes rails and hygiene banks.

500 volunteers contribute **24,000** hours every year of wellbeing activities including knit and knatter sessions, craft clubs, walking groups and more.

50 staff are trained as Dementia Friends.

We offer weekly sessions for parents and carers to weigh their babies.

'I feel like I belong now. It's done me the power of good and has been a saving grace.'- Barbara, Torrington Walking Group member

Impact Story
Winter Coats

Developers Willmott Dixon supplied coat rails to our libraries, working in partnership with Ikea and Julian House.

As well as providing coats, the libraries were able to identify other individuals who needed immediate support in some of the areas and this enable them to refer these individuals to their local agencies and charities who were able to provide support.

There were more than 400 hundred coats donated to the libraries and re-distributed to the community and those in need, some of the surplus has been given to other charities and foodbanks.

DONATE A COAT

www.justgiving.com/campaign/JulianHouseRailCoats