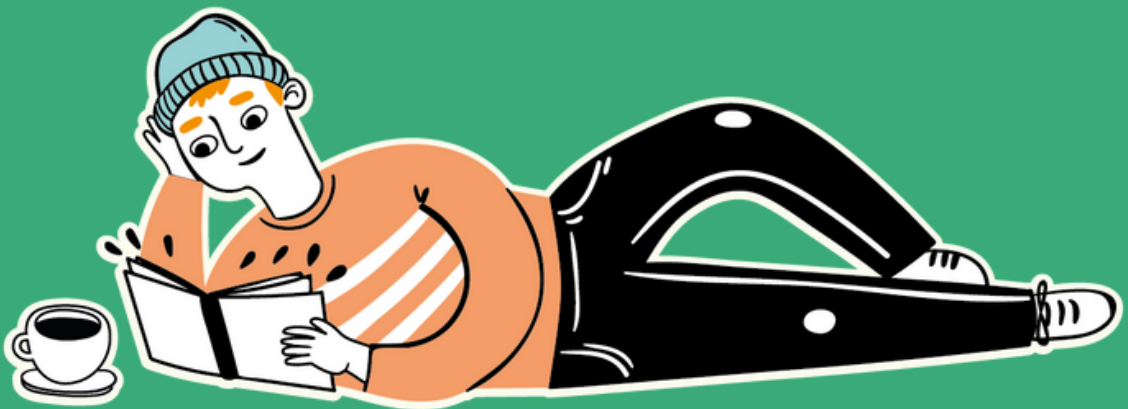


Libraries
Unlimited

Libraries for Life

Impact Report

2023-2024



‘Such a wonderful campaign, that helps so many people’

Emma Williams, Supervisor, Kingsteignton Library

librariesunlimited.org.uk

From our CEO

”

Enriching Lives, Building Communities

I'm so proud that we have now completed a second winter of our warm bank campaign, Libraries for Life.

The campaign is part of a wider national picture, with many library services offering something similar, promoting a positive, vital and renewed understanding of the important role that libraries play within communities and society as a whole in combatting inequality, and proving a vital lifeline for our communities.'



Alex Kittow, March 2024

Combatting Inequality

Across Devon and Torbay, our communities face growing challenges exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis and the Covid-19 Pandemic. Despite our stunning landscape and flourishing tourism industry, our region remains vulnerable with high levels of deprivation, low attainment levels and poor wellbeing outcomes.

In 2022, 50% of adults in the UK reported feeling lonely occasionally, sometimes, often or always.* Loneliness and isolation is considered to be one of the most pressing public health problems that the UK is currently facing, recognised by the World Health Organization.* The affects of being lonely and socially isolated are vast, and affect all areas of health, wellbeing and development; from serious medical conditions, to education and employment implications.

Libraries are one of the few remaining free community spaces that are open for everyone, everywhere: and we are committed to supporting our communities.

Kate Turner

Head of Libraries and Customer Experience

Our Campaign

Safe, warm spaces

Our 54 libraries provide warm, safe spaces during the winter, supporting everyone, but particularly those most in need.

We implemented many projects and extra provisions to reach the most vulnerable in our area between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024.



Warm winter coats

16 libraries hosted rails, in partnership with Ikea, Willmott Dixon and Julian House. Warm winter coats are donated by library users and others from the local community and can be taken by vulnerable people.

Additional opening

Many of our libraries have received funding to stay open on additional days, or for longer hours, to provide free, warm spaces.

Free refreshments

Many of our libraries provided free tea, coffee, and in some cases, warm soup to anyone in need and at risk during the colder months.

Action on Climate Change

Several libraries have community fridges, which save a huge amount of food from landfill. Torrington Library also ran a repair cafe this winter. Simply encouraging people to share a warm space cuts down on energy consumption



DONATE A COAT

The Donate a Coat Campaign is back for 2023!

Donate a spare coat to your local participating library, and help keep vulnerable people in your community warm this winter.

 **Julian House**
The home of opportunity

 **Libraries Unlimited**

 **WILLMOTT DIXON**
BUILDERS



External Funding



The challenge

External funding for warm bank campaigns is competitive.

Last year (2022-23) a total of £33K was achieved collectively by the central team and individual libraries.

Much of this investment supported the improvement of library spaces, the legacy of which also impacted positively this winter.



£100,984 funding applied for

A substantial bid to the National Lottery Cost of Living Fund for £69,000 to cover extended opening hours and activities was unsuccessful.

£30,786 funding achieved

This was achieved primarily from the National Grid and the Devon Growing Communities Fund. A full list is given at the end of the report.

£6000 of extra internal investment

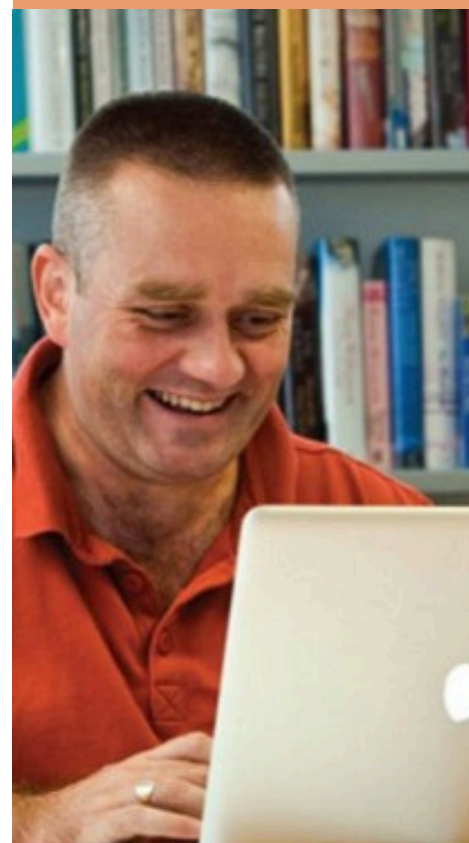
Despite the lack of success of the National Lottery Grant, it was agreed that we would spend some organisational reserves on extended opening hours in some libraries.

The full impact of this investment is detailed below.

Strategic Impact

The campaign delivers strongly not just against Libraries Unlimited's organisational Strategy, but also:

- Devon County Council's Strategic Plan
- Devon County Council's Climate Change Strategy
- Torbay Council's Community & Corporate Plan
- Torbay Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan



Devon County Council & Torbay Council

Develop local support networks to reduce food and fuel poverty and support people that are experiencing hardship (Devon)

Tackle social isolation, particularly among older people, younger and disabled people, and those with a long-term illness (Devon)

Improve wellbeing and reduce social isolation. (Torbay)

Encourage sustainable lifestyles by engagement, awareness-raising and supporting low carbon initiatives (Devon)

Communicate action to tackle climate change locally (Torbay)

Libraries Unlimited

Make a positive contribution to communities, being relevant and responsive to need and demand.

Model and promote the environmental benefits of using a library by living out the philosophy of 'buy once, use many times

Our services and programmes will reduce inequality and improve wellbeing.

Libraries for Life

Combatting inequality

Supporting vulnerable people

Reducing loneliness and isolation

Taking positive action against climate change

Impact by Numbers

1.2 million visits

were made through our doors between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2024.

584 extra opening hours

13 libraries collectively extended their opening hours between January and March 2024 - either opening on extra days, or extending opening times into evenings.

15,389 visits

Happened because of the extra opening hours, an average of almost 20 per hour.

1423 extra books issued

in Tavistock Library alone during the extra Wednesday opening from January to March 2024.



Outcomes

In order to understand the full impact of the campaign, a survey was shared with libraries in April 2024.

The survey received 36 responses from 28 different libraries. The results of this demonstrate the following key outcomes:



People

- Enjoyed safe warm spaces, often for longer periods
- Were less isolated and lonely
- Experienced an improvement in their wellbeing
- Took positive climate action in reducing their carbon footprint



Communities

- Have stronger connections with their libraries
- Are more resilient



Libraries Unlimited

- Saw new and more diverse users came through library doors
- Local profile was raised and strengthened through partnership working

Libraries strengthened their local profile



Campaign highlights

Library respondents were asked to select up to three options in answer to the question: 'what are your top highlights of this winter's campaign?'

Libraries for Life...

1

improved libraries' local profile (25% of respondents)

2

improved relationships with existing customers (21% of respondents)

3

brought new customers through the door (17% of respondents)

4

brought a more diverse audience through the door (13% of respondents)



Impact Stories # 1

”

Barnstaple Library

‘The health and wellbeing fair did bring in a much larger footfall and resulted in a greater diversity of customers coming into the library. Likewise, our digital support and work club offerings also have brought in a greater diversity of customers. Our library sign-ups did increase throughout winter, though the percent that was due to the campaign is uncertain as we also spent a lot of time advertising other events in local media and reaching out to schools and local businesses etc.’

”

Holsworthy Library

‘People are more willing to come in just to pass the time (rather than using computers, borrowing books etc) these days.’

”

South Molton Library

‘We see a homeless family come in 3-4 times a week for several hours at a time to do our self-led crafts and activities/have refreshments. Other regular families come in after school once a week to do the self-led crafts.’

”

Cold Days, Warm Libraries

Libraries
Unlimited

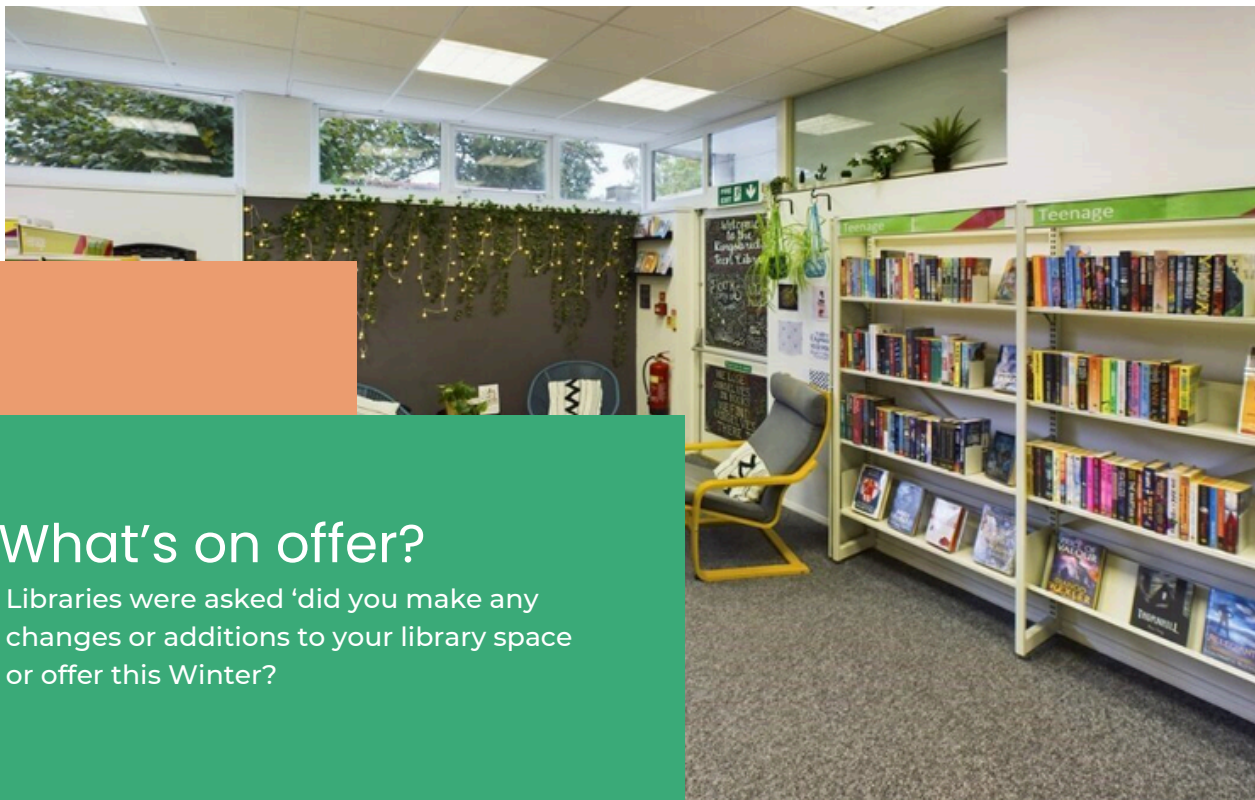


Crediton Library

‘One customer was very appreciative of the Wednesday opening as she works the rest of the week and wanted to make a new CV and apply for a job’

”

Libraries expanded their offer



What's on offer?

Libraries were asked 'did you make any changes or additions to your library space or offer this Winter?'

Enriching Lives

This year saw an increase in the number of warm winter coat rails and those offering warm drinks.

Some libraries made simple adjustments or additions, such as a community jigsaw in Honiton always on the go, board games and crafts at South Molton, as well as making fruit available for people to snack on. Axminster and Kingsteignton were able to offer warm drinks courtesy of donations from local supermarkets.

Two libraries (Bideford and Barnstaple) provided hot soup for lunch one day a week, and Brixham began their 'breakfast together' sessions- all with the assistance of external funding. Ilfracombe Library began a hygiene bank and Torrington Library their inaugural run of Repair Cafes.

On the increase

16

libraries had warm winter coat rails

7

hosted new activities

7

offered warm drinks

2

served soup

1

opened a hygiene bank

Impact Stories # 2

Brixham Library

‘Although it was a long term aim to begin breakfast together sessions, we managed to get funding and the scheme set up by early spring so this was during the winter. These have been very well taken up and we have received lots of positive responses, in person, in writing and on local social media sites. It was funded from a grant from Brixham Chamber of Commerce, and is to be ongoing.’

”



Paignton Library

‘The coats have made a real difference and had many comments from homeless customers and others too that have taken or donated coats.’

”

Exeter Library

‘the clothes rail was very well used. It was self curated by the community, and there was a high turnover of items available to people. People came in to ask about it, so word has spread through the city that this is a resource available in the colder months.’

”

Kingsteignton Library

‘By offering a warm space and warm drink, we found that more and more customers were coming in to enjoy this. A lot of the time they would sit and chat with each other while enjoying their warm drinks, helping greatly with their wellbeing and preventing feelings of isolation during the cold months. Many of the customers that used our warm provision still come in to use the library, some still have warm drinks and offer donations’

”

Libraries formed new partnerships



Working together

Many libraries worked hard to ensure that their provision complimented and worked in tandem with their local community- whether a food bank or an information and support provider.



libraries

Said that they formed completely new partnerships because of the campaign.

Exmouth Library

The Library started up an English Conversation Café for Women in Exmouth.

Aimed primarily at women who speak English as a second language, the library welcomed Afghan and Ukranian immigrants to help build confidence, socialize and feel part of the local community

Paignton Library

‘Working with the Community Hub to provide drinks when the cafe was shut for the day. We have since worked with them again on an Easter trail’



People stayed for longer



What's on offer?

Libraries were asked: 'Can you demonstrate, or believe that the campaign resulted in people staying at the library for longer?'

Crediton Library

'Two elderly customers thanked staff as they really appreciated their hour long chat with each other in the warm library.'

”

On the increase

77% of the libraries that responded felt people dwelt for longer in libraries due to the campaign

56% reported a greater diversity of customers

Impact Stories # 3

Churston Library

“We have a lot of elderly customers who love to linger and read the paper with a cup of tea. Some have commented that they can't afford the heating on all day at home etc or they like the social aspects of meeting up with others at one of our activities. One lady we have works from home and gets no allowance for her heating bill therefore its more economical for her to spend the day with us and she has the added bonus of company and hot drinks too’



Dartmouth Library

‘We had two young homeless people using the library on a regular basis for about two weeks. They used the library as a warm space and made use of public computers, often given extended PC usage time by library staff.’

Ilfracombe Library

The numbers of people using the library increased hugely over the winter months when people struggled to heat their homes, and in response to us providing free refreshments and a free breakfast club for children’

Libraries improved wellbeing & supported vulnerable people



Loneliness and Isolation

Loneliness and isolation is considered to be one of the most pressing public health problems that the UK is currently facing, recognised by the World Health Organization.

The effects of being lonely and socially isolated are vast, and affect all areas of health, wellbeing and development - from serious medical conditions, to education and employment implications.



In 2022, 50% of adults in the UK reported feeling lonely occasionally, sometimes, often or always.

(Campaign to End Loneliness)

Impact Stories # 4

Braunton Library

‘Parent said lovely to have a cuppa and a chat while the children are taking part in art boxes, young parent moved to the area said it was nice to have a warm drink and chat to other parents as not spoken to anyone all day.’

Torquay Library

‘We noticed that the extended hours brought a lot of new customers to us who are homeless. It was a lifeline for them over Winter. Many of them are still using the library every day. We are building up more of an idea of local services for them - like free showers, food, coffee and spaces. They took coats to wear and loved the coffee sessions.’



Barnstaple Library

I needed this [soup], I just lost my wife and I haven't been eating well'

'I thought I wasn't going to have anything for lunch until this...'

'I try to get out as I am a bit of a hermit, so I come here to the library.'

'Eating here is really helping with my limited food budget.'

Crediton Library

‘On the last Wednesday opening one customer said "I should be wearing a black armband as this is the last Wednesday opening. If I wasn't a grown man with tattoos I would cry". Another customer said "I get so much done on the computer on Wednesdays."

People were queuing outside before 10am waiting for the library to open on the last Wednesday session.

Impact Stories #5

Bideford Library



'Last week we had a rough sleeper come in saying he really needed some hot food and was very grateful.

We also had conversations with a lady who's husband died recently. She had been feeling down and was grateful for the company. We were able to chat to her and refer her to another library group called 'Feel Better With A Book' She left saying 'Thank you so much, you've really made a difference.'



Brixham Library



We have an elderly customer who regularly attends groups and events around town and within the library, with her very good friend, M. She came to the library recently and was tearful and upset, telling us that M's dementia has got worse, and she has had to move into a care home. This meant that the customer has not only lost the closeness with her friend (she said they used to go on holiday together even as teenagers) but she has also lost her social companion.

We encouraged her to come to the Breakfast Together the following week, and assured her that she would have company. Another customer overheard this, and told her that she would be bringing her mother and they would love her to sit with them. We reserved them seats together, and when the customer arrived a little before them, our young volunteer sat and chatted with her until they arrived. By the end of the breakfast all the people on the table of 8 were all chatting together.

People took positive climate action



Fighting waste

7 libraries work in tandem with local organisations to run community fridges.

The fridges are designed to combat food wastage, and have daily deliveries from local supermarkets and shops.

In 3 months,
Honiton Library
saved:

2714kg of food from landfill

£8533 in retail value of food

£1139 worth of complete meals

8648kg of CO2 emissions...
which is the equivalent of
driving....

1980 miles



Impact Stories # 6

Torrington Repair Cafe

Torrington Library hosted High Bickington Repair Cafe once a week. In the first week, 23kg of items alone were saved from landfill, 40 drinks and cake were served!



Honiton Library Customer



It's a great resource. We've had some basic groceries such as a bag of flour and a bag of sugar where the paper bags had been split a little, a jar of pasta sauce where the label was damaged as one jar in the box had broken and spilt the contents over the other jars making them messy but still very usable.

We've had eggs, fruit, bags of crisps from multipacks which had split so couldn't be sold, some vegetables, a few bunches of flowers and lots of bread. It never ceases to amaze me how much bread there is - what a waste that would be.

We have to resist the cakes and buns but there is a group of people who enjoy these greatly on their visits to the library. We never take more than we can use and some days there is more than others.

It is a great reason to get out and visit the library to see what there is. It also means that we check the stock of books more frequently often finding ones we are eagerly waiting for.

Another bonus is that if we have any surplus produce from the garden this year we can take it along to share with others thus again reducing any waste. We had surplus packets of seeds earlier in the year which we took along for others to pick up.

We greatly value this service, as well as saving us money – we estimate about £100 over these past three months – it gives us a great feeling of satisfaction that this food has not gone to waste and also given us a bit more of our budget to spend locally in the shops.

It's a win-win situation.

Snapshots

Braunton Library

Ran chair yoga sessions for wellbeing.

South Molton Library

Extended opening and worked in partnership with a Community Developer to host 'Mindful Mondays'

Bampton Library

20% of the week's issues were on the extra Monday at Bampton between January and March

Tiverton Library

Opened for an extra 124 hours between January and March- and received 1332 visits during those extended hours. The local Rotary Club also helped in serving warm drinks. They also offered an IT basics course with Learn Devon- which had a positive impact on confidence in applying for jobs.

Tavistock Library

Opened extra on a Wednesday and received an average of 20 visits per hour

Future Plans

We can do more

It is absolutely clear from this campaign that communities need their libraries more than ever.

Libraries were asked to highlight what they would like to achieve in forthcoming winters, and there were some clear priorities.



Food

This year has seen an expansion in food provision across libraries, and this is something which other libraries would also like to do, expanding the warm drink offer to more libraries able to offer things such as soup and breakfast clubs.

Additional opening hours

Many of the libraries which opened for more hours this year would like to continue next Winter as they felt this was very valuable.

Wastage & Recycling

Our libraries are very committed to positive climate action, and there is an opportunity to expand the offer of things such as the warm coat rails, and uniform swaps.

**Libraries
Unlimited**

Cold Days, Warm Libraries

Your library. Warm welcoming and here for life.

Warm Wednesdays Tiverton Library

Extended library opening hours this winter.
From 3rd January - 27th March 2024

Borrow a book, use a PC or WiFi and enjoy the warm,
welcoming library

WEDNESDAYS 9AM - 1PM



librariesunlimited.org.uk/events

Libraries Unlimited is a registered charity 1170092.
To donate, please visit librariesunlimited.org.uk

Supported by

Devon
County Council

TORBAY
COUNCIL

Marketing & Comms



In the news

Our campaign received wide press coverage across the Country.

Below is just a snapshot of how much the library offer was valued.

Sample articles

- [North Devon Gazette](#)
- [Crediton Courier](#)
- [Exeter Chamber](#)
- [North Devon Journal](#)

Ilfracombe Library
18 October 2023 · 📍

NEW TO ILFRACOMBE LIBRARY! We now have a hygiene bank, providing free toiletries and sanitary products to anyone who needs them, no questions asked - this is situated in the non-fiction area at the front of the library and you don't need to ask to take items, we just ask that you only take what you need 🙏

We've started off this bank with a generous donation from Tesco Ilfracombe, but to keep it stocked up we'll be looking to the generosity of our customers and local people to drop in the occasional item - we'll gratefully accept shampoo, shower gel, soap, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrushes, handwash and sanitary products, as long as they are in unopened, labelled packaging. If you need any more information, give us a call on 01271 862368.

Libraries Unlimited
#librariesunlimited #librariesforlife #ConnectingCommunities #welcomingspaces

ILFRACOMBE LIBRARY

Libraries Unlimited

HYGIENE BANK

Free toiletries and sanitary products available for anyone who needs them, no questions asked

We welcome donations of unopened, labelled items - please hand them to a member of staff. Thank you!

TOOTH PASTE **SOAP** **SHAMPOO**

ILFRACOMBE LIBRARY, THE CORNER, EAST SOLE, BIDEFORD, EX38 8JH
Supported by: **DEVON** **TORBAY COUNCIL**

2 comments · 7 shares

Libraries Unlimited
26 February · 📍

The colder months can make it harder to get out and meet people - especially if you are trying to save money 🙏

Your local library is the place to be! 🙌

Chat with your friendly local librarians, meet people at one of our many social groups and clubs or enjoy some low-cost entertainment guaranteed to put a smile on your face 😊

We're open, we're warm and we're free ✨ Come and visit us today.

Devon:
<https://www.devonlibraries.org.uk/web/arena/our-libraries>

Torbay:
<https://www.torbaylibraries.org.uk/web/arena/our-libraries>

What's on at the library:
<https://librariesevolve.org.uk/events> See less

👍❤️ 8 3 💬 3 ➦

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Grant Funding & Donations

Thank you

We are hugely grateful to the generosity of all our funders, including our library Friends groups, who had enabled everything from kitchen refurbishments, to comfortable seating and breakfast clubs.

From the funder:

'We were delighted to fund because our libraries go the extra mile in order to provide essential resources for our Devon communities, foster learning and continue to create a vibrant gathering space for everyone'

Vanessa Davies- Devon Growing Communities Fund

Funder	Amount
Devon County Council's Growing Communities Fund	£16,174
The National Grid	£9957
Brixham Chamber of Commerce	£1315
Totnes Town Council	£1210
Honiton Town Council	£900
Teignbridge District Council	£250



Help us to do more



The Libraries for Life campaign has been instrumental in renewing awareness of the vital role that libraries play in communities and our wider society.

The increase in footfall, event attendance and length of time that people spend in our libraries is evidence of the growing need for our services.

With your help, we can do more. Get in touch to find out more about different ways of supporting us.

Contact Us :



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