

LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales · Charity number 1153726

Details

Other names LFLA

Status Registered

Legal form CIO

Registered 2013-09-09

Register [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

Contact

Address Low Fell Library Association
Low Fell Library
710A Durham Road
Gateshead
Tyne And Wear
NE9 6HT

Phone 01914336408

Email info@low-fell-library.org.uk

Website www.low-fell-library.org.uk

Activities

Objects: TO ADVANCE EDUCATION BY THE PROVISION OF A LIBRARY FACILITY AND SERVICE AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL, COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES FOR LOW FELL INHABITANTS AND THE SURROUNDING AREAS. TO FURTHER OR BENEFIT THE SAID INHABITANTS WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, RACE, RELIGION OR ANY OTHER OPINIONS BY ASSOCIATING TOGETHER THE SAID INHABITANTS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES, VOLUNTARY AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS IN A COMMON EFFORT TO ADVANCE EDUCATION AND TO PROVIDE FACILITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR RECREATION LEISURE TIME OCCUPATION WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF LIFE FOR THE RESIDENTS.

Activities: The association provide a public library service for residents in Low Fell and the surrounding area of Gateshead. Our activities include running a book lending service, providing access to Gateshead Council's public access computers in the library, RhymeTime and other regular children's activities, a monthly Book Group and a programme of speakers and events for the local community.

Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, Arts/culture/heritage/science, Recreation
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** GATESHEAD
- Gateshead

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£33,110	£22,430	-	-
2024-03-31	£10,090	£17,161	-	-
2023-03-31	£20,051	£15,820	-	-
2022-03-31	£19,963	£16,878	-	-
2021-03-31	£27,634	£12,323	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
FRANK HINDLE	Chair	2013-07-10
Alyson Barratt		2022-10-16
Eileen Donnelly		2024-11-06
Gillian Beauchamp		2014-09-03
Jennifer Elizabeth Johnson		2022-10-16
June Mary Hesselewood		2019-11-06
Ross Brown		2016-07-19
Susan Le Jeune		2015-06-30
Terence Wileman		2013-10-15

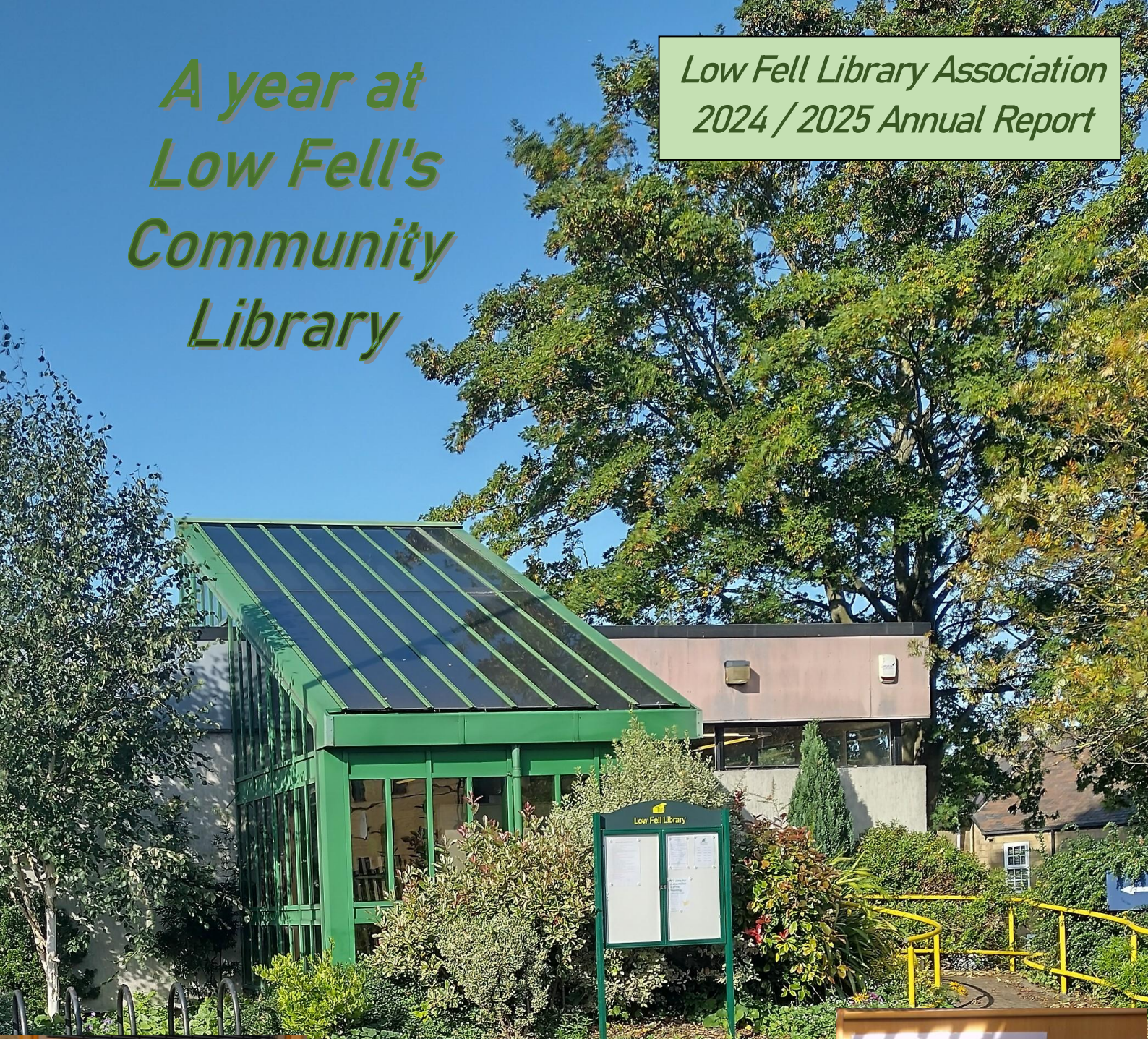
LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1153726

Accounts

A year at Low Fell's Community Library

Low Fell Library Association
2024 / 2025 Annual Report



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT
www.low-fell-library.org.uk facebook.com/LowFellLibrary
Registered charity no. 1153726



telephone: 0191 433 6408

email: lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk

LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the twelfth annual report from the Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who continue to keep Low Fell Library going.

2024/2025 has seen a normal year of library operations, with a full programme of activities across the twelve months; these are described in more detail below.

The library remains affected by the energy and cost of living crisis, with gas and electricity bills over the winter of 2024/25 continuing to have a noticeable effect on the library finances. The library continues to be a designated Warm Welcome place, providing a location for anyone needing this facility, in addition to the more usual book lending and computer use.

During the year the library saw the unexpected passing of two volunteers, Mike Nye and Mariam Dunlop, both sadly missed.

As ever, many thanks are due to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library, so that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

Some comments from our library customers:

I love the year coming to the library, it's so cosy!

Children really enjoy Rhyme Time sessions, the volunteers for this are great

The computer course is comprehensive and helpful, a very worthwhile course

Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

Low Fell Library, 2024 / 2025

Introduction

In 2024/25 the library had a full programme of events and activities over the course of the year.

The number of Rhyme Time sessions has continued with five sessions taking place each week, on Mondays, Tuesdays (two sessions), Thursdays and Fridays. Knit and Natter sessions have been continuing on a Wednesday morning. The University of the Third Age (U3A) holds monthly reading group meetings in the library and the Dickens Fellowship also meets once a month.

Gateshead Children and Young People Primary Mental Health Service has been providing mental health consulting services for young people, their parents and professionals, held on a monthly basis, with a different topic under consideration each month. Our community room has been hired when 'one to one' consultations are required.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners, and we thank them wholeheartedly for their ongoing commitment to this.



The library continues to act as a collection point for the Gateshead Food Bank and also provides facilities for the recycling of used printer ink cartridges and batteries. The receptacles for these are located in the main library (food bank) and in the foyer (batteries, printer cartridges).



Our customers' experiences

We get a lot of positive feedback from our customers and visitors but it often difficult to capture comments that are made in the course of a conversation. However, we have a diverse range of customers, who come back to the library regularly.

Here are just a few examples:

- Some customers come in every week, not for books or IT, but for a cup of tea and a chat with the volunteer staff they now regard as friends.
- Customers who come in to enjoy a warm place and some time on the computers.
- Our Knit and Natter group who love our library and make us loads of knitted goods to sell at our Easter and Christmas fairs.
- Our Rhyme Time parents and children who come back week after week, enjoying not only Rhyme Time, but time in the library playing and chatting after the sessions. We even enlist their help from time to time!

Events in the library in 2024 / 2025:

In April 2024 the library held two children's craft sessions during the Easter holidays and a series of eight beginners' computer classes commenced at the end of the month, running into June 2024. These covered a range of basic computer / IT skills and related aspects of being online. These were run by Gateshead Council's Learning Skills and were generally well attended.

Between April and August 2024, the library hosted regular (weekly) sessions relating to children's wellbeing and autism.

On May 2nd 2024, the library served as a polling station for the local elections, opening between 7.00 am and 10.00 pm.



In addition, in May the community room hosted an art exhibition by local artist, David Coburn.

In early July the library hosted a well-attended talk by the local author, Susan Willis, whose quirky crime books are now available to borrow from the library.



Later in the month, there were two children's craft sessions held in the community room and the summer reading challenge (for children aged between 2 and 11) started, with two challenges – one run by Gateshead Council and one by LFLA.

Two adult craft sessions also took place in the community room at the end of July and in August 2024.

At the end of August a further two children's craft sessions were run in the library and were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed.

The Macmillan Coffee Morning, held at the end of September, raised £165.00 for the charity, with a lot of home baked cakes and savoury items on sale in the library.



The library sold poppies and other Remembrance Day items during October and the end of the month saw the usual Halloween displays and a half-term children's craft session.

Computer classes recommenced in November 2024, with five sessions stretching into early December.

The annual Christmas Fair took place in the library in late November 2024 and was very well attended, with activities for children, refreshments tables, stalls selling crafts, bric a brac, plants and books as well as Santa and his helper providing a focal point for the children.



December 2024 saw an adult wreath-making craft session taking place in the library, which was well attended and very much appreciated by those participating.

In January 2025 the library's community started to be used by the Purple Bear Music Group, with weekly sessions enabling children to experience making music by using a range of musical instruments.



Other library facilities and services:

- Photocopying and printing from the public computers has been available throughout the year and continues to be a popular service.
- Room hire of the community room is ongoing and provides a small revenue stream.
- Informal tables for meetings and tutoring are available and are regularly used.
- Staff kindly continue to donate magazines for customers' use.

- Information services, including hotel locations, travel directions, social services support are provided.
- The Food Bank collection point in the library continues to provide assistance to those in need.
- Donated books, CDs and DVD sales are available to the public, although the numbers accepted are limited due to limited space available for storage of these.
- A range of hot and cold drinks are available free of charge thanks to a grant supporting the 'Warm Welcome' initiative.
- Recycling facilities are provided for batteries and printer cartridges.
- NHS hearing aid batteries are provided free of charge.
- The library provides work experience for students from local schools and they contribute a range of skills, including (right) developing bookmarks for the children's books section of the library.



Library usage statistics for 2024 / 2025:

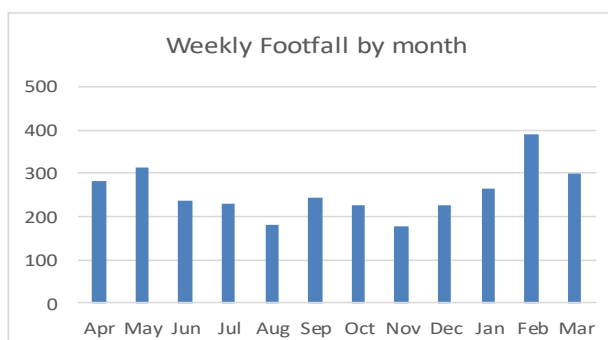
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2024 / 2025 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2024 / 2025	2023 / 2024
Total hours during the year when the library was open	1936	1690
Mean weekly footfall	255.9	276.3
Mean numbers of active borrowers	143	149
Mean numbers of books borrowed in the year	642.1	656
Mean time in minutes, for each computer use, per month	75	81
Mean new members per month	15	14
Mean numbers of Rhyme Time attendees per month	157	170

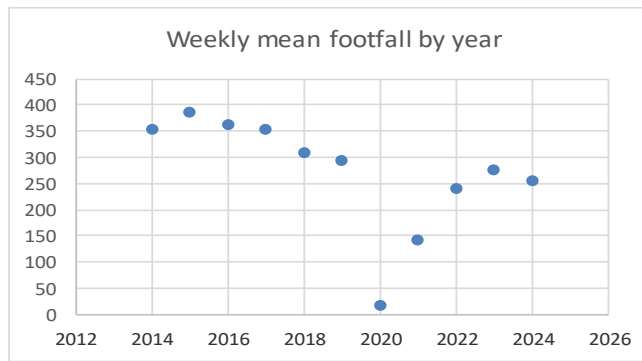
Footfall

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured from numbers recorded in the second week of each month.

The footfall figures for 2024/25 are shown below. The donation of magazines to the library for public use has been seen to have generated some additional interest in visits to the library. Numbers were, as usual, higher in the winter months. In accordance with the ethos of the 'Warm Welcome' scheme, customers are not asked for the reason for their visit, but this increase in the winter months suggests that some visitors are probably using the library for this purpose.



The below graph shows the average weekly visitor numbers since 2014 and demonstrates the continuing recovery, post-Covid, albeit with a slight decline in 2024/25 compared with 2023/24.



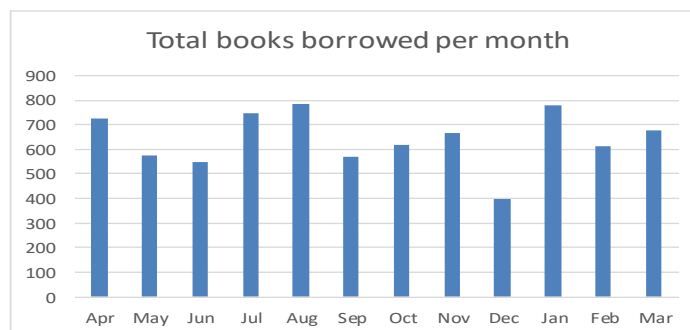
Post pandemic numbers appear to have stabilised and are, on average, some 25% down on pre-pandemic footfall. This reflects the sort of levels experienced by other libraries regionally and nationally. Overall, we still maintain a strong and loyal customer base. Oakfield school has made one visit (in February 2025), with more planned, and Cedars school pupils and staff are regular visitors

Borrowing of books

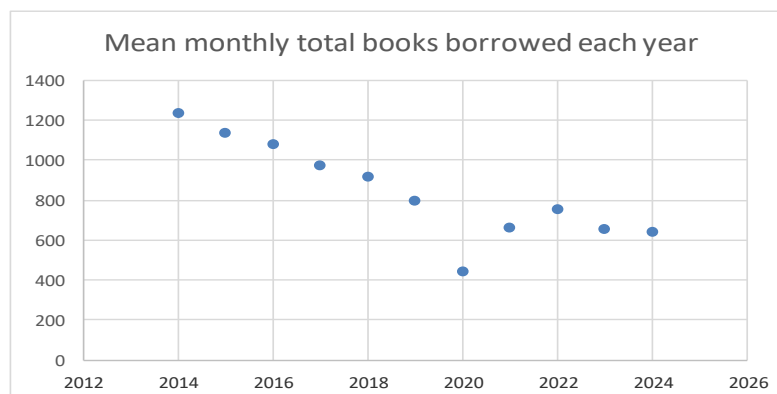
The information provided in the graph below is based on a monthly report provided by Gateshead Central Library, detailing the books borrowed throughout the month.

As usual, the number of books borrowed peaked in the summer months, possibly due to the Summer Reading Challenge, but levels have also been high in the early part of 2025 and it is to be hoped that this trend will continue. The reduced opening of the library over the Christmas period has a tendency to affect the numbers of books borrowed in this month.

Monthly numbers of books borrowed:



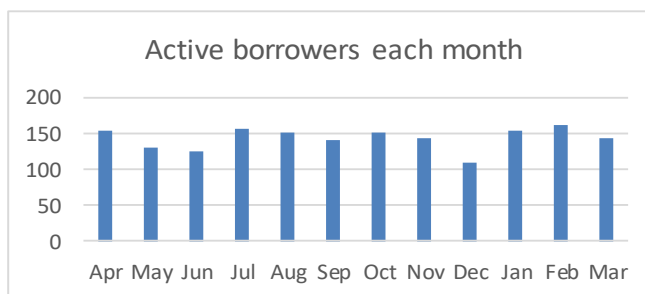
Average numbers of books borrowed monthly, year on year:



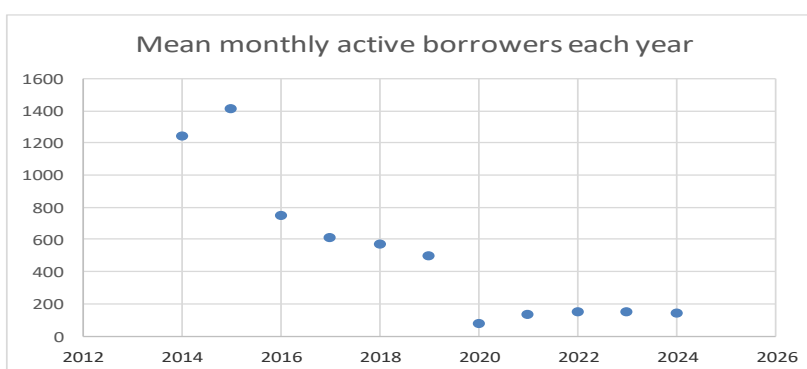
Whilst there has been a recovery from the effects of Covid, the increase in borrowing over previous years now seems to have levelled off.

Numbers of active borrowers

This is based on a monthly report from Gateshead Central Library detailing the number of active individual book borrowers throughout each whole month. Again, December is traditionally low and while borrowing in the summer months is likely to be improved by the Summer Reading Challenge, levels are broadly similar across much of the remainder of the year.



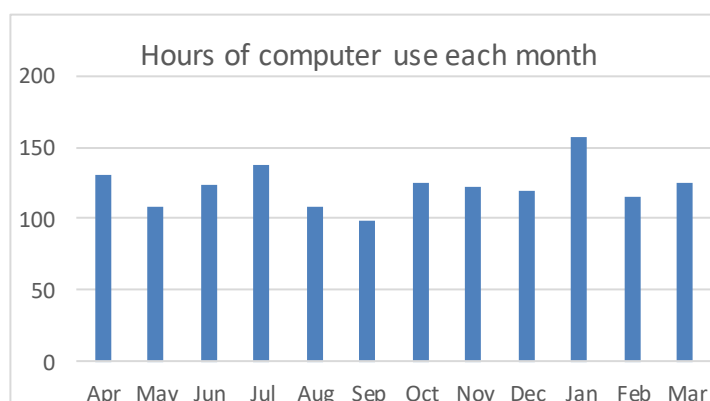
The monthly trend, year on year, is shown in the graph below:



Whilst the number of active borrowers has declined dramatically in the years running up to 2020 and Covid, since then these have remained relatively stable. The uncharacteristically high values for 2014 and 2015 may be the result of a different method of calculation of these by Gateshead Central Library.

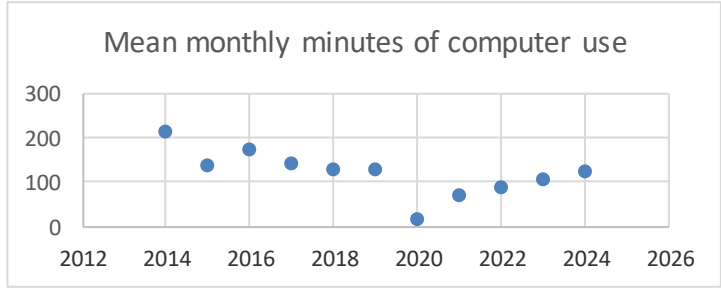
Public Computer utilisation

During 2024/25, all five public computers have been in use. The information below is based on the total hours of usage of all five of the public computers, in each month during the year, as recorded on the sign-in sheets.

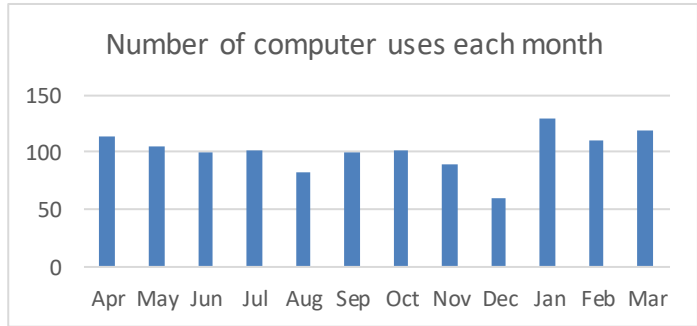


The provision of free WiFi also encourages people with their own computers or tablets to use the library. The graph below demonstrates that library computer usage continues to improve. The time seems to be split between customers staying for several hours and those who call in for a few minutes, mainly for printing documents. There is also a demand for printing from the use of a memory stick as well as from mobile phones, via email and the staff computers are used where necessary to support these requests.

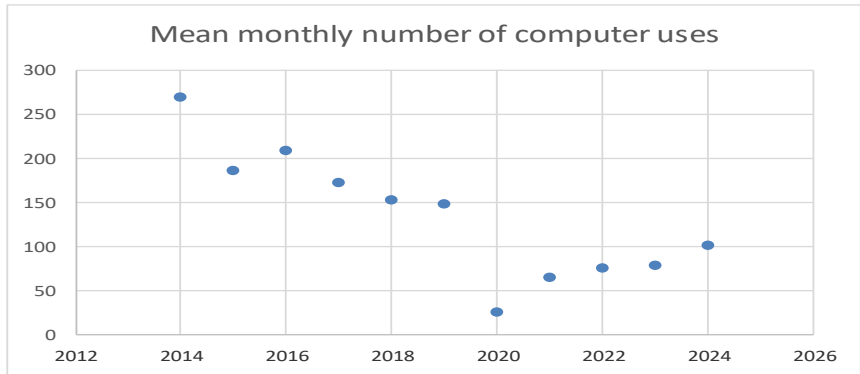
The average time (in minutes) of each computer use per month is shown below:



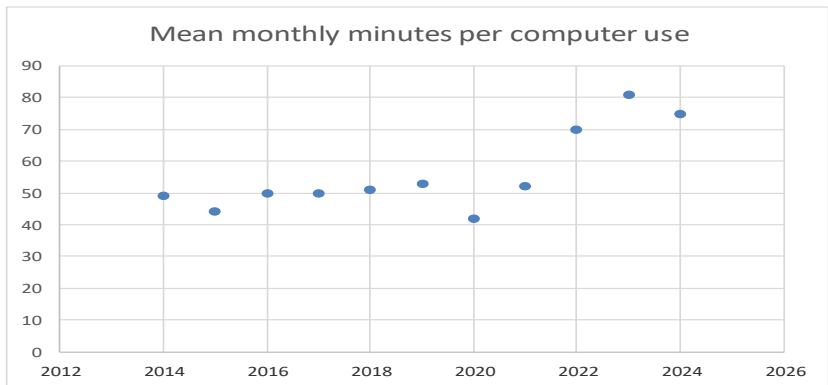
Looking at the number of computer uses in each month throughout the year (see below), the winter months (with the exception of December, when library opening is reduced) showed an increased level of use, possibly as a result of the 'Warm Welcome' initiative.



The graph below shows that the trend for the average number of uses of the public computers, per month, has continued to improve, despite people being likely to have computing facilities at home. The cost of printer ink, or lack of any home printer, is often given as the reason for use of public computers and the library printer.



The average time spent using public computers has stabilised in recent years, as shown in the graph below.

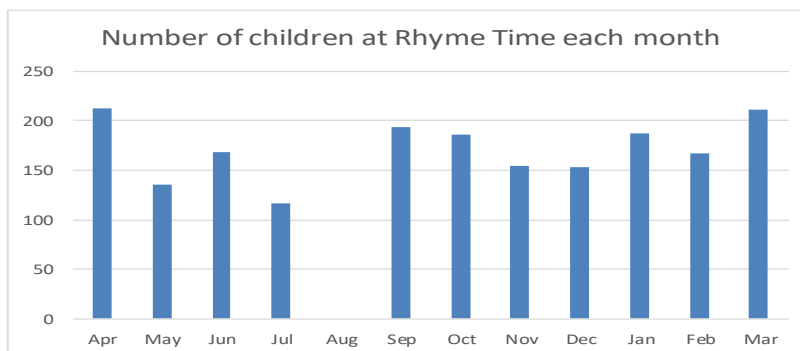


Children in Rhyme Time

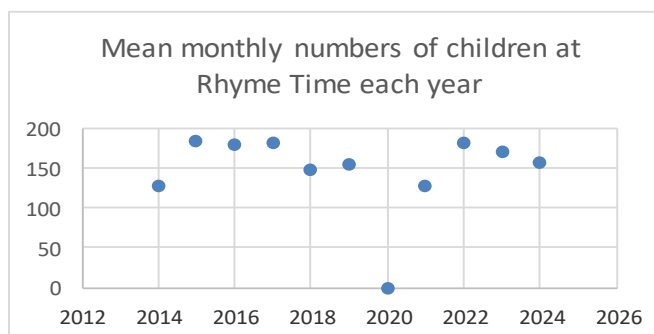
The graph below shows the total number of children attending each month, based on the records for all sessions of Rhyme Time held each week.

There are no Rhyme Time sessions in August to give the hard-working volunteers a well-deserved break! While December is traditionally a poor month, given the closure for Christmas and other demands on parents' time, in 2024 the drop in numbers for that month was less than in previous years.

The library has, for the most part, run five sessions per week, with only occasional weeks when staffing issues or library events have reduced the number of sessions.



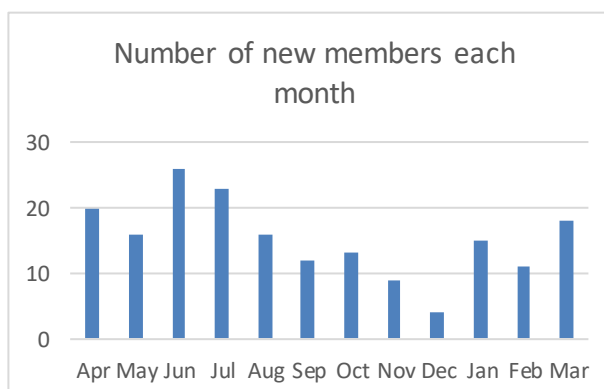
The number of children attending Rhyme Time has returned to pre-Covid levels, as shown by the graph below, albeit with a slight decline in numbers over the past two years.

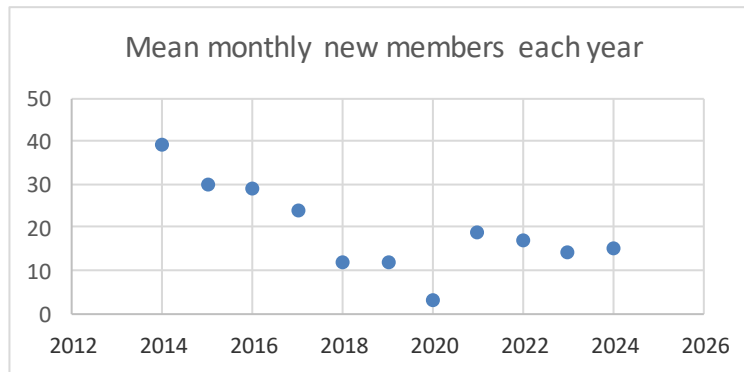


New library members

The library has continued to sign up new members, as shown below. This is based on the register used to record whether or not the new member has agreed to receive library marketing information. These figures are less reliable than in previous years when membership sheets were printed and counted.

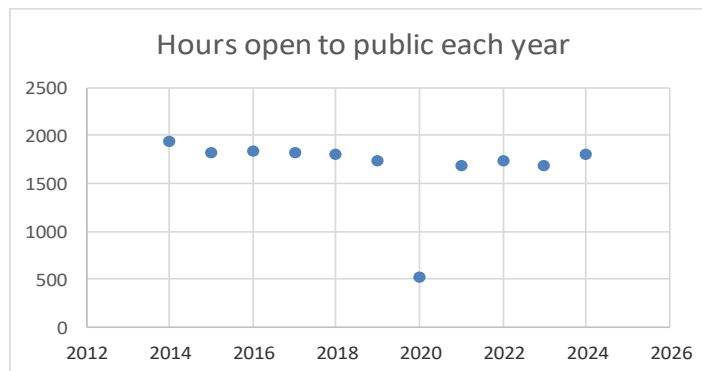
There was a steady influx of new members throughout the year. The spike in the summer months is probably as a result of the Summer Reading Challenge, encouraging more younger readers to join the library. Following the post-Covid spike in new members, the average yearly numbers are relatively steady and slightly up on 2023.





Hours when the library is open

In 2024/25, the library was open for a total of 1,807.5 hours, the highest number since Covid. There were only a couple of small closures, largely as a result of staff unavailability / works to the building.



Other information

Craft sessions for children during the various school holidays were funded by a Lottery grant, and generally well attended. The total number of children attending these throughout the year was 136, which is comparable with the previous year's number (143).

Adult craft sessions were also held during the year, making Christmas wreaths, Japanese purses and beadwork brooches. These also proved popular.

Work experience has continued, with four students during the year, one each from the Lord Lawson Academy, St Thomas More Academy, Emmanuel College and Cardinal Hume Catholic School. Feedback from these students indicated that they were excellently supported through the process by the volunteers, and that the students also found the experience both rewarding and useful.

Some nine customers were given **advice on their CVs** with five receiving interview coaching. Four of these are known to have obtained employment within a short time period, with no feedback from the others.

School visits continued, with regular visits from the Cedars School. The pupils borrow books on a staff ticket and are controlled by the staff from the school. Throughout the year there were 303 children who visited the library from the Cedars School. Oakfield School also visited the library, with 44 children attending, and books borrowed by staff so as to support the interaction with literature and current projects, with the children.

Computer courses, as mentioned previously, were conducted using Learning Skills and initially funded by a Lottery grant. Subsequently Learning Skills has used the library facilities to run their own courses, with a total of 56 attendees during the year (reflecting a reduced number of courses in comparison with previous years).

Other activities, as detailed above, have included the Easter Fair (173 attendees); Christmas Fair (139 attendees); and the Susan Willis author event (25+ attendees).

Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers. The library has offset those volunteers retiring due to personal reasons by adding a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library's processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer can bring to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance.

An induction into the library (and Association's) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this.



After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns.

Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Email lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk or talk to anyone on the library desk.

Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

The Association holds regular meetings with trustees (elected by the members at the Association's AGM) and members (volunteers), at which policy matters and other major decisions (such as agreeing the annual budget) are discussed and agreed. Trustee meetings are held on a six-week cycle with day to day management carried out by the officers, in accordance with policies and decisions that have been previously agreed by members and trustees. Advice from the Charity Commission, including on rules and regulations, guides trustees and the Council's Library Service provides advice and assistance in relation to the building fabric and library matters.

An 'Activities Group' of Association members meets on a regular basis to plan and oversee the programme of activities at the library and reports back to the trustees and the Association as a whole.



Finances

In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various Government grants and donations have enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2024/2025. These included monies from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Local Community Fund, enabling the library to run a range of activities during the year.

A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tubs on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle).

Reserves policy

The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

Statement of accounts

This is attached as a separate document.

Business plan

Following confirmation of further investment in our premises by Gateshead Council, in 2025 / 26, we anticipate completing an updated business plan in mid or late 2026.

In conclusion

With more than twelve years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, the written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

Low Fell Library Association

Registered Charity No. 1153726

**Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2025**

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Charity Name: Low Fell Library Association

Charity No: 1153726

Registered Office:
710a Durham Road
Low Fell
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6HT

Trustees:
Frank Hindle (Chair and acting Treasurer)
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)
Terence Wileman (Health and Safety Officer)
Alyson Barratt
Ross Brown (Vice Health & Safety Officer)
June Hessewood
Jennifer Johnson
Mike Nye (To 14th December 2024)
Janice Thomas (To 26th November 2024)
Eileen Donnelly (From 6th November 2024)

Independent Examiner:
Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
53 Kirkdale
Spennymoor
Co. Durham
DL16 6UH

Bankers:
Lloyds Bank PLC
11-12 The Shopping Village
Kingsway
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0EN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the Trustees	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
Charity No	1153726
On the accounts for period ended	31 March 2025
Set out on pages	5-8

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view,' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
53 Kirkdale
Spennymoor
Co. Durham DL16 6UH

Date: 3rd September 2025

Low Fell Library Association

Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025

	Notes	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2025 £	2024 £
Receipts					
Grants & Donations	4	1,106.00	20,821.00	21,927.00	861.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	3,530.00	3,530.00	2,616.00
Library Takings		-	4,217.00	4,217.00	3,949.00
Other Income		-	2,109.00	2,109.00	2,081.00
Bank Interest		-	1,327.00	1,327.00	583.00
Total Receipts		1,106.00	32,004.00	33,110.00	10,090.00
Payments					
Library & Community Events		1,384.00	873.00	2,257.00	5,153.00
Library Running Costs	5	500.00	14,676.00	15,176.00	9,620.00
Office & General Expenses	6	1,450.00	2,383.00	3,833.00	488.00
Volunteer Costs		-	79.00	79.00	34.00
Governance costs	7	-	787.00	787.00	778.00
Donations		99.00	130.00	229.00	76.00
Miscellaneous		-	69.00	69.00	1,012.00
Total payments		3,433.00	18,997.00	22,430.00	17,161.00
Surplus/Deficit for the period		(2,327.00)	13,007.00	10,680.00	(7,071.00)
Total funds brought forward 1st April 2024:		3,766.00	44,912.00	48,678.00	55,749.00
Transfer between funds:		(889.00)	889.00	-	-
Total funds carried forward 31st March 2025:		550.00	58,808.00	59,358.00	48,678.00

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 March 2025**

		2025	2024
	Notes	£	£
Current assets:			
Cash at bank and at hand		59,358.00	48,678.00
Income received still to be banked		12.00	-
Total current assets:	8	59,370.00	48,678.00
Current liabilities:			
		-	43.00
Total current liabilities:		-	43.00
Net assets:		59,370.00	48,635.00
Represented by:			
Restricted reserves		550.00	3,766.00
Unrestricted reserves		58,820.00	44,869.00
Total funds:	9	59,370.00	48,635.00

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Board of Trustees:

Signed: *S. de Jure* Position: SECRETARY

Signed: *M. Hindle* Position: CHAIR

Low Fell Library Association

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

1	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
2	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9th September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
3	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
4	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations to the charity - £20,821.00 • Donations received on behalf of other charities - £56.00 • Gateshead Council Local Community Fund - £550.00 • Gateshead Council Warm Spaces Grant - £500.00
5	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities - £6,601.00 • General running costs - £3,584.00 • Cleaning costs - £4,991.00
6	<p>This includes items such as publicity, furnishings, and small items of equipment.</p>
7	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance - £142.00 • Accountancy costs - £488.00 • Insurance - £157.00

8	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash at bank, in hand and income to be banked as at 31st March 2025 - £59,370.00. This is held in a range of accounts, including a current account, savings accounts, and cash floats.
9	<p>This includes:</p> <p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p> <p><i>Restricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity for a specific purpose as agreed with the funder.</p>

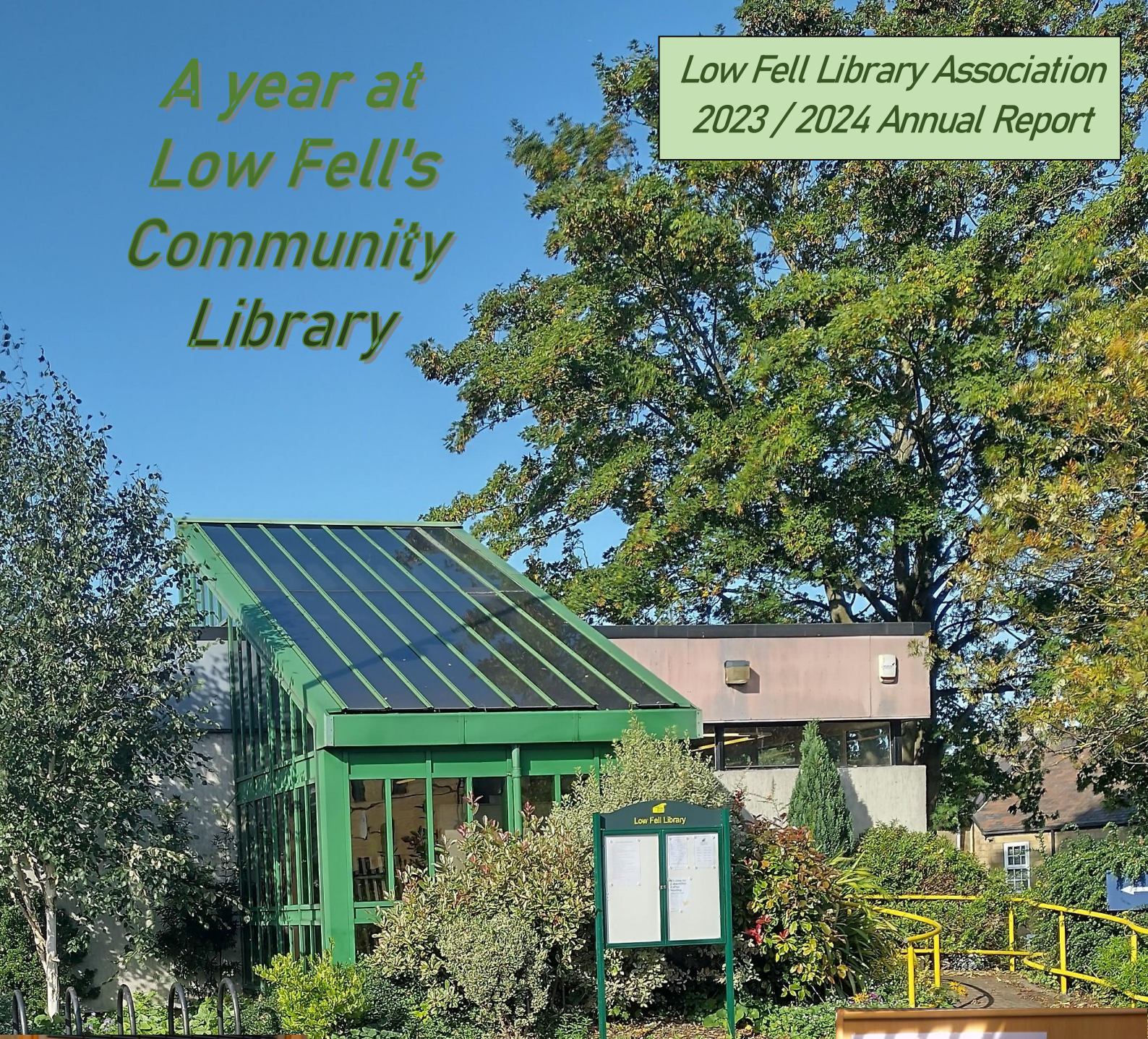
LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1153726

Accounts

A year at Low Fell's Community Library

Low Fell Library Association
2023 / 2024 Annual Report



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT
www.low-fell-library.org.uk facebook.com/LowFellLibrary
Registered charity no. 1153726



telephone: 0191 433 6408

email: lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk

LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the eleventh annual report from Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who keep Low Fell Library going.

2023/2024 has seen much more of a return to normality for the library's operations. The library has had a full programme of activities across the year, which are described in more detail below.

The library has continued to be affected by the energy and cost of living crisis with gas and electricity bills, continuing to have a noticeable effect on the library finances over the winter of 2023/24. The library is a designated Warm Space and provides a location for anyone needing this facility, in addition to the more usual book lending and computer use.

As ever, many thanks are due to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library and ensuring that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

Some comments from our library customers:

I have loved the year I have been coming to the library, it's so cosy!

The children really enjoy the Rhyme Time sessions and the volunteers for this are great

The computer course is comprehensive and helpful, a very worthwhile course

Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

Low Fell Library, 2023 / 2024

Introduction

In 2023/24 the library returned to a much more normal series of activities and has had a full programme of events and activities over the course of the year.

The number of Rhyme Time sessions has continued to run with the extra sessions added on Monday and Friday mornings and there are now five sessions each week, on Mondays, Tuesdays (two sessions), Thursdays and Fridays. Knit and Natter sessions have been continuing on a Wednesday morning.

Unfortunately, more leaks to the roof required the library to be closed for almost a week in June 2023 but the repairs were put in place quickly, minimising disruption to customers and library services.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners, and we thank them wholeheartedly for their ongoing commitment to this.



The library continues to act as a collection point for the Gateshead Food Bank and also provides facilities for the recycling of used printer ink cartridges and batteries. The receptacles for these are located in the main library (food bank, printer cartridges) and in the foyer (batteries).



Our customers' experience

We get a lot of positive feedback from our customers and visitors but it often difficult to capture comments that are made in the course of a conversation. However, we have a diverse range of customers, who come back to the library regularly.

Here are just a few examples:

- Some customers come in every week, not for books or IT, but for a cup of tea and a chat with the volunteer staff they now regards as friends.
- Customers who come in to enjoy a warm place and some time on the computers.
- Our Knit and Natter group who love our library and make us loads of knitted goods to sell at our Easter and Christmas fairs.
- Our Rhyme Time parents and children who come back week after week, enjoying not only Rhyme Time, but time in the library playing and chatting after the sessions. We even enlist their help from time to time!

Events in the library in 2023 / 2024:

In April 2023 the library held two sessions of beginners' computer classes, three weeks each, running into May 2023, covering basics including keyboard skills and other techniques. These were run by Gateshead Council's Learning Skills and well attended with many attendees continuing to attend similar, subsequent sessions.

April 2023 also saw two children's craft sessions, held in the Easter holidays, and run by Creative Stars Art and Design Club, making Easter bunnies and bee mobiles.

On May 4th 2023 the library served as a polling station for the local elections, opening between 7.00 am and 10.00 pm.



The library celebrated its ten year anniversary in July 2023 with a morning of music, food and drink and entertainment including face painting. The celebrated local mural artist, Gemma Lynas, created a fantastic mural for the wall of the library's community room with the help of local children making butterflies from craft materials.

The library would like to thank the National Lottery Community Fund for the financial support that assisted with the hosting of this event.



Craft sessions for children continued in the summer holidays, with five events provided by Calisto, Artventurers and The Kiln, running from July to August 2023. Also running throughout the school summer holidays was the LFLA summer reading challenge for young children. This was in addition to the scheme run by Gateshead's library service. Children were required to make three visits to the library to borrow books, receiving stickers on their first visit, a face mask on their second visit and an age-appropriate book on the third visit.

In August 2023 a Session was hosted in the library by the Dogs Trust, for attendees to learn how to approach dogs safely.



In September the Macmillan Coffee Morning which raised £150 for the charity.

Also in September 2023, the library held a book sale to raise funds for Oakfield School.



At the end of October 2023, two 'Witch & Wizard making' workshops were held in the library, run by Creative Stars.

The library Christmas Fair took place in November 2023 and was very well attended, with lots of activities for children, Santa and his helper were present, and there was a variety of refreshments and stalls selling crafts, bric a brac, plants and books amongst other things.



Beginners' computer classes provided by Gateshead Council's Learning Skills once again took place at the start of 2024, with five classes in January / February and a further five classes from late February onwards. Again, these were very well attended and well appreciated by those who attended.

Some comments from those sessions are:

"Would just like to let you know how informative the course has been for me - I have learned a lot more about how to use my I-pad and some very useful tips. Thank you for all your help."

"It has been a pleasure to be part of your Computer Class. I have amazed myself how much I have learned and, it's all up to you. I hope that if you ever do another class in the spring I would like to be considered. Thank you for having me."

"Just to say Joan and I really had a great time at the courses (back to back) and did learn new things also we refreshed a lot. Thanks again for a great time."

"I have enjoyed the classes with such a pleasant class and your guidance and would love to attend further classes next year."

"The course is comprehensive and helpful. A very worthwhile course."

In February 2024, Creative Stars ran two 'Crazy Cactus pebble painting' workshops in the library, which were greatly enjoyed by everyone.

The 2024 Easter Fair took place in March 2024, with plenty of stalls and activities as well as excellent refreshments and was once again very well attended. Particular thanks are due to the local businesses, One Stop and the Rare Drop, for their generous donations to the raffle and the tombola.



Customers commented afterwards as to how nice the Fair was, such a 'jolly affair' and a happy atmosphere; and also that their children had had a good time on the craft activities.

Throughout the year, the library has been used by the University of the Third Age which meets monthly for their book club.

Dickens Fellowship has also continued to meet on a monthly basis.

Gateshead Children and Young People Primary Mental Health Service has been providing mental health consulting services for young people, their parents and professionals, held on a monthly basis, with a different topic under consideration each month. Our community room has been hired when 'one to one' consultations are required.

Other library facilities and services:

- Photocopying and printing from the public computers has been available throughout the year and continues to be a popular service.
- Room hire of the community room is ongoing.
- Informal tables for meetings and tutoring are available.
- Newspapers are not provided due to financial constraints. Staff have kindly continued to donate magazines for customers' use.
- Information services, including hotel locations, travel directions, social services support are provided.
- The Food Bank collection point in the library continues to provide assistance to those in need.
- Donated books, CDs and DVD sales are available to the public, although the numbers accepted are limited due to limited space available for storage of these.
- A range of hot and cold drinks are available for a nominal charge with a free refill.
- Recycling facilities are provided for batteries and printer cartridges.
- NHS hearing aid batteries are provided free of charge.

Library usage statistics for 2023 / 2024:

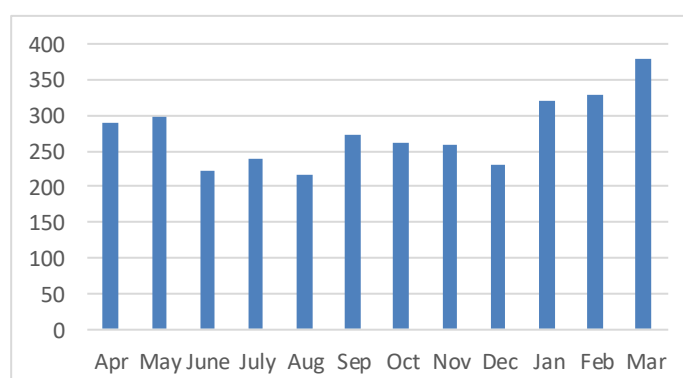
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2023 / 2024 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2023 / 2024	2022 / 2023
Total hours during the year when the library was open	1690	1732
Mean weekly footfall	276.3	240.7
Mean numbers of active borrowers	149	147
Mean numbers of books borrowed in the year	656	754.2
Mean time in minutes, for each computer use, per month	81	70
Mean new members per month	14	17
Mean numbers of Rhyme Time attendees per month	170	181.5

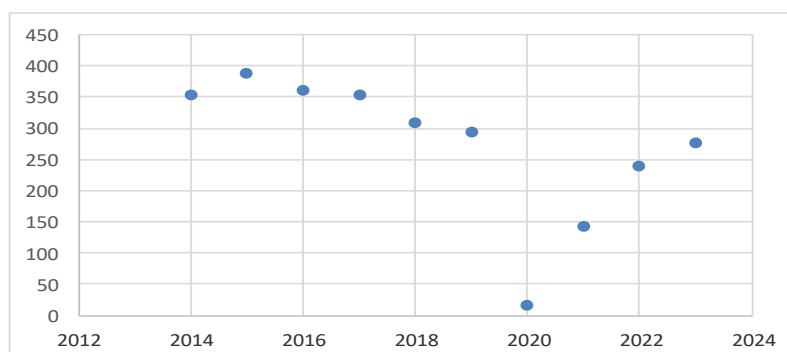
Footfall

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured from numbers recorded in the second week of each month.

The footfall figures for 2023/2024 are shown below. There was a general rise in footfall through the year, with the usual exception of December. Numbers were higher in the winter months. In accordance with the ethos of the 'Warm Spaces' scheme, customers are not asked for the reason for their visit, but this increase in the winter months suggests that some visitors are probably using the library for this purpose.



The below graph shows the average weekly visitor numbers since 2014 and demonstrates the continuing recovery, post-Covid.

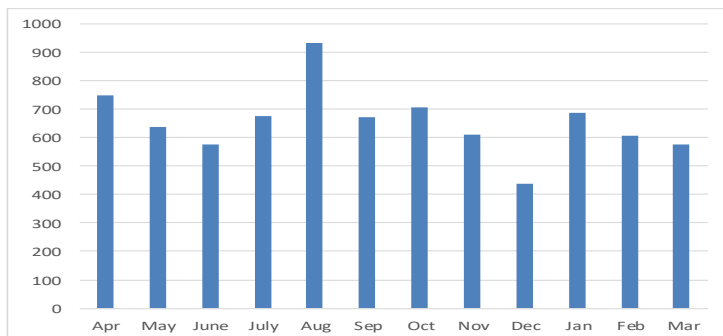


Borrowing of books

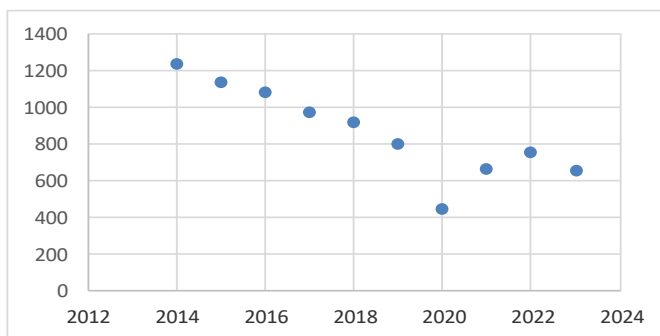
The information provided in the graph below is based on a monthly report provided by Gateshead Central Library, detailing the books borrowed throughout the month.

As usual, the number of books borrowed peaked in the summer months, possibly due to the Summer Reading Challenge. Numbers are continuing to recover, post-Covid. The reduced opening of the library over the Christmas period has a tendency to affect the numbers of books borrowed in this month.

Monthly numbers of books borrowed:

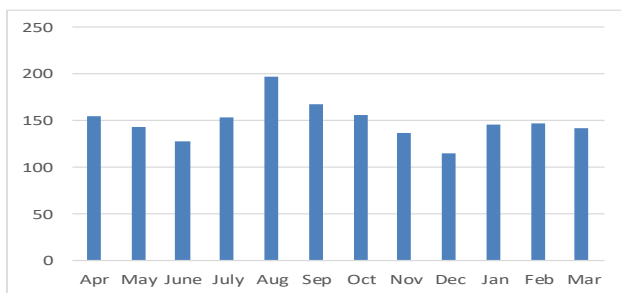


Average numbers of books borrowed monthly, year on year:

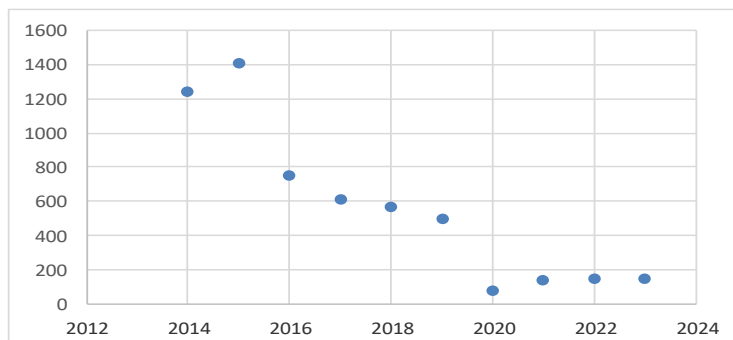


Numbers of active borrowers

This is based on a monthly report from Gateshead Central Library detailing the number of active individual book borrowers throughout each whole month. Again, December is traditionally low and August is likely to be improved by the Summer Reading Challenge.



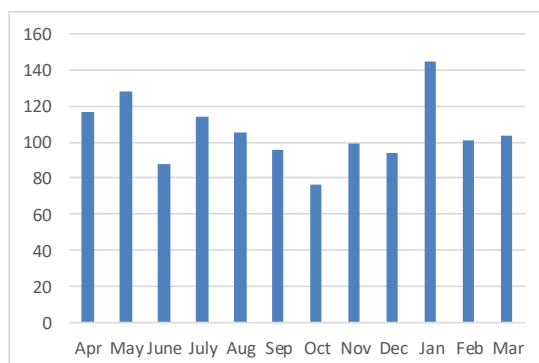
The monthly trend, year on year is shown in the graph below:



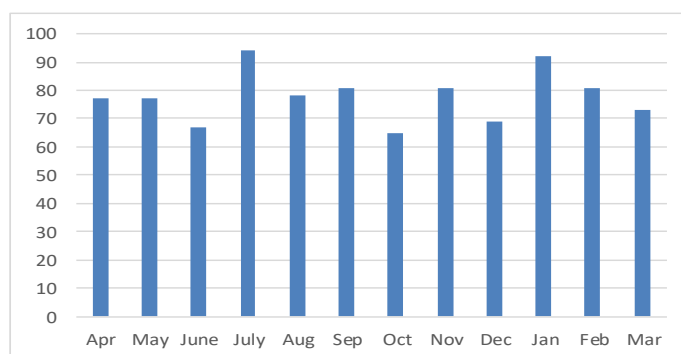
Whilst the number of active borrowers has declined dramatically in the years running up to 2020 and Covid, since then these are showing a gradual improvement. The uncharacteristically high values for 2014 and 2015 may be the result of a different method of calculation of these by Gateshead Central Library.

Public Computer utilisation

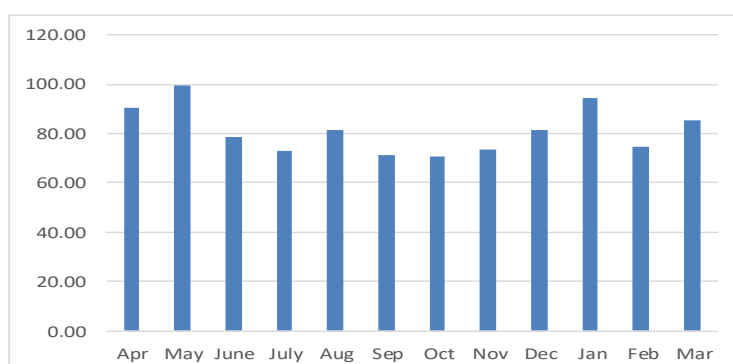
During 2023/2024, all five public computers have been in use. The below information is based on the total hours of usage of all of the public computers in any one month, as recorded on the sign-in sheets.



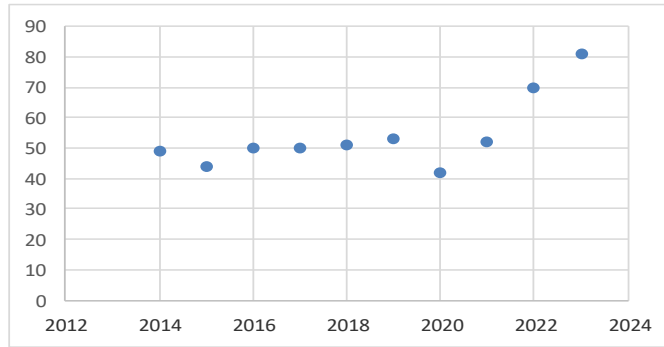
The provision of free WiFi also encourages people with their own computers or tablets to use the library space. The below graph demonstrates that computer usage continues to improve since Covid.



The average time (in minutes) of each computer use per month is shown below:

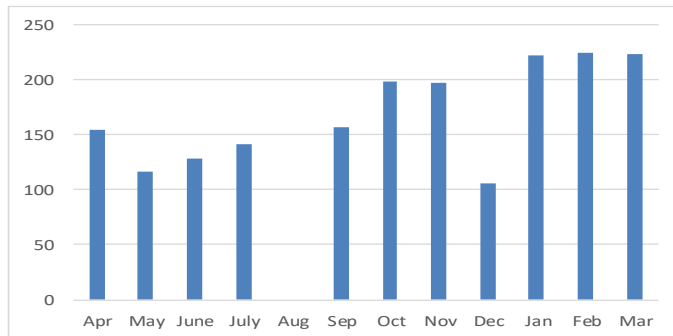


This appears to show an increase in the average time spent per use, on the public computers, in the colder months, which may be as a result of the library providing a 'Warm Space'. As shown in the graph below, the number of minutes of computer use per visit has increased significantly over the year, potentially reflecting the pressures of increased heating costs encouraging customers to spend longer in the library.

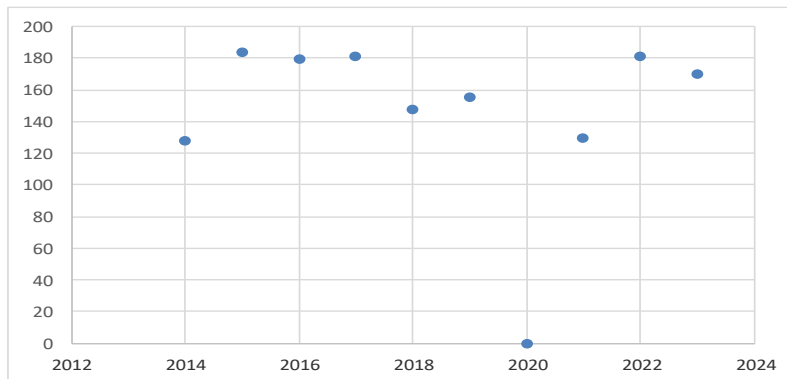


Rhyme Time

The graph below shows the total number of children attending each month, based on the records for all sessions of Rhyme Time held each week.

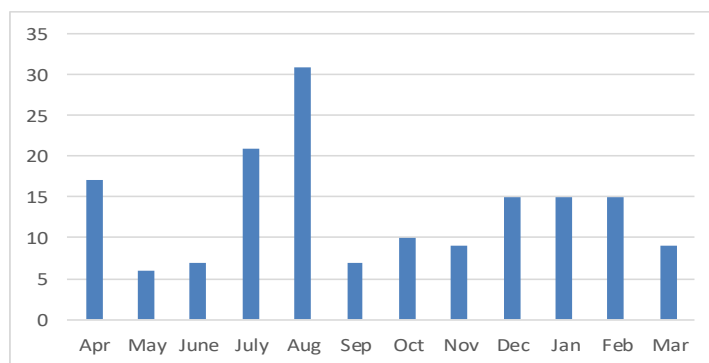


The numbers of children attending Rhyme Time has recovered well since Covid and has been helped by the introduction of additional sessions in 2022/3. This has assisted in spreading the numbers across the various sessions each week. There are no Rhyme Time sessions in August to give the hard-working volunteers a well-deserved break! December is traditionally a poor month given the closure for Christmas and other demands on parents' time.

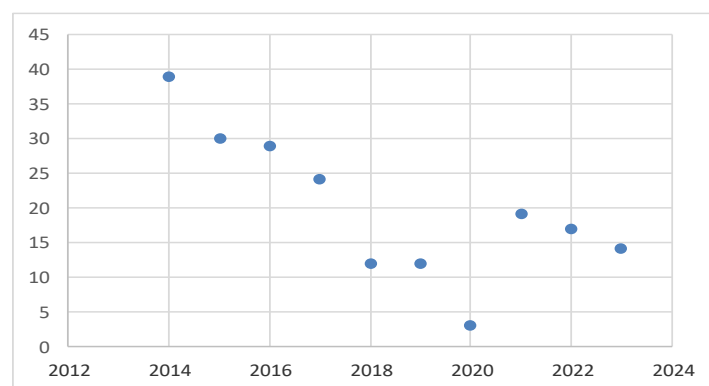


New members

The library has continued to sign up new members, as shown below. This is based on the register used to record whether or not the new member has agreed to receive library marketing information. These figures are less reliable than in previous years when membership sheets were printed and counted.



The library has seen a steady influx of new members throughout the year. The spike in August probably relates to the Summer Reading Challenge encouraging more younger readers to join the library. Year on year numbers of new members have declined, and whilst these had stabilised, post-Covid, at slightly higher levels than in the years before 2020, this is again showing a slight decline.



Other information

Craft sessions for children during the various school holidays were reinstated, funded by a Lottery grant, and the total number of children attending these throughout the year was 143, a significant increase on the previous year's number (87).

Work experience has continued, with two students benefitting in the year, one from Lord Lawson Academy and one from St Thomas More Academy. Feedback from these students indicated that they were excellently supported through the process, by the volunteers, and also found the experience both rewarding and useful.

Seven customers were given **advice on their CVs** with two receiving interview coaching. Four of these are known to have obtained employment within a short time period, with no feedback from the others.

School visits were reinstated with regular visits from the Cedars School. The pupils borrow books on a staff ticket and are controlled by the staff of the school. Throughout the year there were 375 children who visited the library from the Cedars School. Oakfield School also recommenced visits, with two visits occurring, comprising a total of 48 students and 11 staff members, with books borrowed by staff so as to support the interaction with literature, with the children.

Computer courses, as mentioned previously, were conducted using Learning Skills and initially funded by a Lottery grant. Subsequently Learning Skills has used the library facilities to run their own courses, with a total of 139 attendees during the year.

Other activities, as detailed above, have included the Christmas Fair (199 attendees); Easter Fair (173 attendees); 10th Anniversary celebrations (157 attendees including past and present volunteers); Dog's Trust presentation (10 attendees).

Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers. The library has offset those volunteers retiring due to personal reasons by adding a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library's processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer brings to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance. An induction into the library (and Association) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this.



After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns. The library holds regular meetings for all volunteers to attend, where strategic policy and operational issues are amongst the matters discussed and agreed.

Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Email lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk or talk to anyone on the library desk.

Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

The Association holds regular meetings with trustees (elected by the members at the Association's AGM) and members (volunteers), at which policy matters and other major decisions (such as agreeing the annual budget) are discussed and agreed. Trustee meetings are held on a six-week cycle with day to day management carried out by the officers, in accordance with policies and decisions that have been previously agreed by members and trustees. Advice from the Charity Commission, including on rules and regulations, guides trustees and the Council's Library Service provides advice and assistance in relation to the building fabric and library matters.

An 'Activities Group' of Association members meets on a regular basis to plan and oversee the programme of activities at the library and reports back to the trustees and the Association as a whole.



Finances

In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various Government grants and donations have enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2023/2024. These included monies from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Local Community Fund, enabling the library to run a range of activities during the year.

A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tubs on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle).

Reserves policy

The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

Statement of accounts

This is attached as a separate document.

Business plan

The Association's three year business plan for the period 2016-2019 is now behind us and is in the process of review and revision in anticipation of a resumption of some sort of post-Covid normality.

In conclusion

After over eleven years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

Low Fell Library Association

Registered Charity No. 1153726

**Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

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Charity Name: Low Fell Library Association

Charity No: 1153726

Registered Office:
710a Durham Road
Low Fell
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6HT

Trustees:
Frank Hindle (Chair and acting Treasurer)
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)
Terence Wileman (Health and Safety Officer)
Alyson Barratt
Ross Brown (Vice Health & Safety Officer)
Brenda Buxton (to 1st November 2023)
June Hesslewood
Jennifer Johnson
Elsie Neville (to 24th July 2023)
Mike Nye (from 1st November 2023)
Janice Thomas (from 3rd April 2023)

Independent Examiner:
Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
53 Kirkdale
Spennymoor
Co. Durham
DL16 6UH

Bankers:
Lloyds Bank PLC
17 Ellison Walk,
Gateshead,
Tyne and Wear
NE8 1BF

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the Trustees	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
Charity No	1153726
On the accounts for period ended	31 March 2024
Set out on pages	5-8

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view,' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
53 Kirkdale
Spennymoor
Co. Durham DL16 6UH

Date: 5th August 2024

Low Fell Library Association

Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024

	Notes	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2024 £	2023 £
Receipts					
Grants & Donations	4	-	861.00	861.00	12,172.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	2,616.00	2,616.00	3,912.00
Library Takings		-	3,949.00	3,949.00	2,143.00
Other Income		-	2,081.00	2,081.00	1,732.00
Bank Interest		-	583.00	583.00	92.00
Total Receipts		-	10,090.00	10,090.00	20,051.00
Payments					
Library & Community Events		4,634.00	519.00	5,153.00	1,785.00
Library Running Costs	5	541.00	9,079.00	9,620.00	12,279.00
Office & General Expenses	6	313.00	175.00	488.00	496.00
Volunteer Costs		-	34.00	34.00	71.00
Governance costs	7	-	778.00	778.00	835.00
Donations		-	76.00	76.00	149.00
Miscellaneous		746.00	266.00	1,012.00	205.00
Total payments		6,234.00	10,927.00	17,161.00	15,820.00
Surplus/Deficit for the period		(6,234.00)	(837.00)	(7,071.00)	4,231.00
Total funds brought forward 1st April 2023:		10,000.00	45,749.00	55,749.00	51,518.00
Transfer between funds:		-	-	-	-
Total funds carried forward 31st March 2024:		3,766.00	44,912.00	48,678.00	55,749.00

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 March 2024**

		2024	2023
	Notes	£	£
Current assets:			
Cash at bank and in hand		48,678.00	55,749.00
Total current assets:	8	48,678.00	55,749.00
Current liabilities:			
Donation still to clear		43.00	-
Total current liabilities:		43.00	-
Net assets:		48,635.00	55,749.00
Represented by:			
Restricted reserves		3,766.00	10,000.00
Unrestricted reserves		44,869.00	45,749.00
Total funds:	9	48,635.00	55,749.00

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Board of Trustees:

Signed: *D. De Jorne* Position: SECRETARY LFLA

Signed: *J Hindle* Position: CHAIR

Low Fell Library Association

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

1	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
2	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9th September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
3	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
4	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations to the charity - £742.00 • Donations received on behalf of other charities - £119.00
5	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities - £7,461.00 • Repairs and renewals - £541.00 • General running costs - £1,618.00
6	<p>This includes items such as publicity, furnishings, and small items of equipment.</p>
7	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPL PRS - £13.00 • ICO - £35.00 • Gateshead Council - £69.00 • Accountancy costs - £473.00 • Insurance - £157.00 • Fundraising - £31.00

<p>8</p>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash at bank and in hand as at 31st March 2024 - £48,678.00. This is held in a range of accounts, including a current account, savings accounts, and a cash float.
<p>9</p>	<p>This includes:</p> <p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p> <p><i>Restricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity for a specific purpose as agreed with the funder.</p>

LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1153726

Accounts

A year at Low Fell's Community Library

Low Fell Library Association
2022 / 2023 Annual Report



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT
www.low-fell-library.org.uk facebook.com/LowFellLibrary
Registered charity no. 1153726



telephone: 0191 433 6408

email: lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk

LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the tenth annual report from Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who keep Low Fell Library going.

2022/2023 has thankfully seen something of a return to normality for the library operations, though a number of pre-Covid user groups have not yet returned to make use of the library space. However, that has been countered by some new users of the library, of which more below.

The library has, like most organisations, been hit by the energy and cost of living crisis with gas and electricity bills, in particular, having a noticeable effect on the library finances over the winter of 2022/23. The library is now a designated Warm Space and provides a location for anyone needing this facility, in addition to the more usual book lending and computer use.

As ever, many thanks are due to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library and ensuring that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

Some comments from our library customers:

It's great that the library is open for business!

Library customer

The children really enjoy the Rhyme Time sessions!

Library customers

We love coming to the library, there's a great children's area

Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

Low Fell Library, 2022 / 2023

Introduction

At the start of the 2022 / 2023 year, whilst Covid was still prevalent, restrictions had been lifted and the library was running its normal services for the community.

The number of Rhyme Time sessions was increased to take account of additional demand with extra sessions added on Monday and Friday mornings. Knit and Natter sessions have been continuing on a Wednesday morning, and in September 2022 the library began to host Citizen Advice outreach services, with drop in sessions on Tuesday afternoons and appointments for longer / more focused advice provided in the community room, initially on Friday afternoons, subsequently changing to a Thursday afternoon. As with similar provisions elsewhere in the Borough, these took a while to get going but have become more well used as people have become aware of this service and have started to make use of it.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners, and we thank them for their ongoing commitment.



Unfortunately, the library continued to suffer from its leaky roof over the course of 2022 / 23 with a sizeable gap to the glazing in the foyer creating particular problems and requiring the repurposing of the 'book decontamination bins' used during Covid, to catch the leaks! Leaks in the library itself were also an

ongoing problem which Gateshead Council finally managed to (largely) resolve in January / February 2023, with the removal of the skylights and resealing of the main roof, as well as repairing the foyer glazing. Unfortunately, this meant that the library had to close for a few weeks whilst this work was carried out. However, we are hopeful that the library will now be a 'dry' as well as a 'warm' space for its customers.

The library continues to act as a collection point for the Gateshead Food Bank and also provides facilities for the recycling of used printer ink cartridges and batteries. The receptacles for these are located in the main library (food bank, printer cartridges) and in the foyer (batteries).



Our customers' experience

We get a lot of positive feedback from our customers and visitors but it is often difficult to capture comments that are made in the course of a conversation. However, we have a diverse range of customers, who come back to the library regularly.

Here are just a few examples:

- One customer comes in every week, not for books or IT, but for a cup of tea and a chat with the volunteer staff he now regards as friends.
- Customers who come in to enjoy a warm place and some time on the computers.
- Our Knit and Natter group who love our library and make us loads of knitted goods to sell at our Easter and Christmas fairs.
- Our Rhyme Time parents and children who come back week after week, enjoying not only Rhyme Time, but time in the library playing and chatting after the sessions.

Events in the library in 2022 / 2023:

In April 2022 we held the usual Easter coffee morning, which was well supported by stalls and 150 visitors.



Also in April 2022, Futureskills NE delivered two free courses: one gaining attendees a level 2 qualification in Customer Services with the other providing a level 3 qualification in Education & Training.

In May 2022, Artventurers ran a special, Queen's Jubilee half-term craft session for 3 to 8 year-olds. Artventurers returned to the library, along with The Kiln, to deliver a programme of summer activities – these ran between the end of July and the beginning of September 2022.



In August, the Dogs Trust held a free educational / fun workshop for children, on safe behaviour around dogs. A pre-school reading challenge for under four year-olds ran between mid-July and mid-September 2022.

As noted in the introduction, from September 2022, Citizens Advice has been using the library space on Tuesday afternoons as a drop-in for people wanting advice, with one to one sessions (when needed) held in the community room on Thursday afternoons. Information on the numbers using this service is included in the library data section, below.

In recognition of the late Queen Elizabeth's state funeral, the library was closed on the 19th September 2022.

A Macmillan coffee morning took place on 23rd September 2022.

In October 2022 there was a well-attended Halloween crafts session organised by local artist Gemma Lynas, from Calisto, for the children's autumn half-term.

A Christmas Fair with Santa and a number of stalls took place in December 2022, this was very well supported by the local community with 178 attendees, and it was great to see a lot of families and children in the library.



In September 2022 the library started providing a Warm Space for local people in need of this facility and as part of this, offered a range of free hot drinks to our customers from January 2023 through to April 2023.

Additionally, within the 2022 / 2023 annual report year, the 2023 Easter Fair was held in the library on 25th March 2023, as at Christmas this was really well attended, with 93 adults and 42 children present during the course of the Saturday morning.



The library was selected by Gateshead Council to act as a polling station for the May 2023 local elections, there will be more on this in the 2023 / 2024 annual report!

Other library facilities and services:

- Photocopying was maintained except during our closure in February 2023.
- Faxing has been available throughout the year.
- Room hire of the community room has recommenced.
- Informal tables for meetings and tutoring are available.
- Newspapers – these were discontinued in March 2020 due to Covid-19 and have not been reinstated due to financial constraints. Staff have kindly continued to donate magazines for customers' use.
- Information services, including hotel locations, travel directions, social services support are provided.
- The Food Bank collection point in the library continues to provide assistance to those in need.
- Donated books, CDs and DVD sales are available to the public, although the numbers accepted are limited due to limited space available for storage of these.
- A range of hot and cold drinks are available, with these being provided free from September 2022 through to April 2023 under the "Warm Spaces" programme.
- Recycling facilities are provided for batteries and printer cartridges.
- NHS hearing aid batteries are provided free of charge.

Library usage statistics for 2022 / 2023:

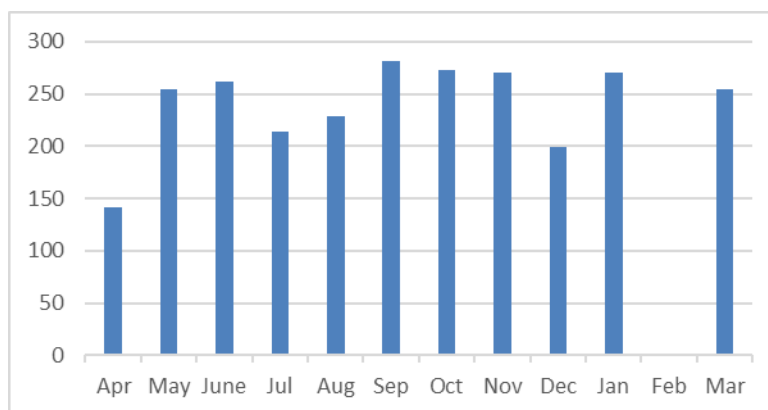
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2022 / 2023 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2022/ 2023	2021 / 2022
Total hours during the year when the library was open	1732	1689.5
Mean weekly footfall	240.7	141.7
Mean numbers of active borrowers	147	136
Mean numbers of books borrowed in the year	754.2	661.8
Mean time in minutes, for each computer use, per month	70	52
Mean new members per month	17	19
Mean numbers of Rhyme Time attendees per month	181.5	129.2

Footfall

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured by a tally chart recorded in the second week of each month.

The footfall figures for 2022/2023 are shown below. It was noted that some vulnerable members of the public remained reluctant to use the library facilities, particularly at the start of 're-opening'. Actions such as not reinstating newspapers in 2022 were financial decisions rather than related to Covid-19.



No footfall figures were recorded for February 2023, since the library was closed for most of this month as a result of the repairs to the roof. The figures show a general rise in footfall through the year, with the usual exception of December. With the library available as a "Warm Space" from September 2022, footfall numbers started to approach pre-Covid levels. This can be seen from the following table.

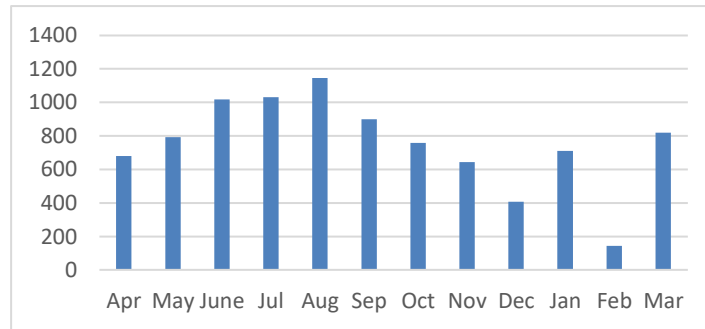
Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	353.5	405	248	364.0
2015	387.6	490	319	374.5
2016	361.4	417	304	363.5
2017	353.8	464	293	341.0
2018	308.3	352	277	296.5
2019	294.4	335	233	286.5
2020	16.0	58	0	7.0
2021	141.7	228	50	142.5
2022	240.7	281	0	254

Borrowing of books

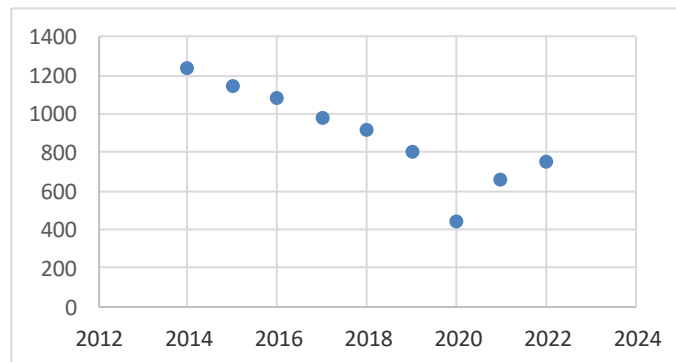
The information provided in the graph below is based on a monthly report provided by Gateshead Central Library, detailing the books borrowed throughout the month.

As usual, the number of books borrowed peaked in the summer months whilst reduced numbers of days when the library was open in December 2022 affected the number of books borrowed in that month, as did the closure in February 2023 for the roof repairs. Numbers are steadily recovering, post-Covid and if not for the February closure, would be likely to have stemmed the decline of previous years.

Monthly numbers of books borrowed:

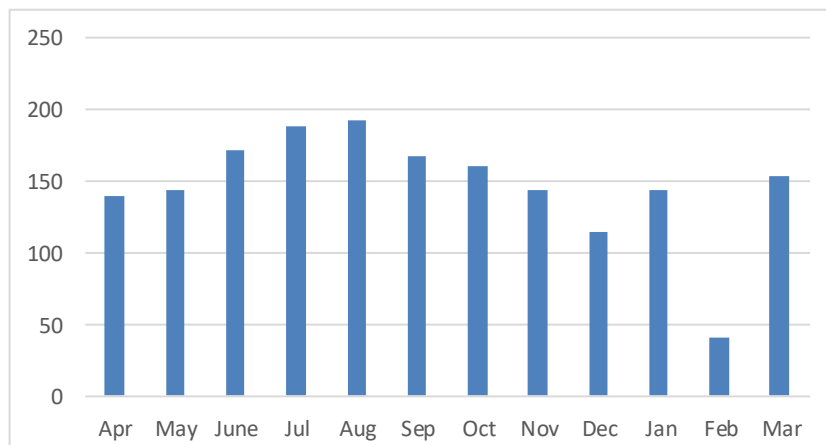


Average numbers of books borrowed monthly, year on year:



Numbers of active borrowers

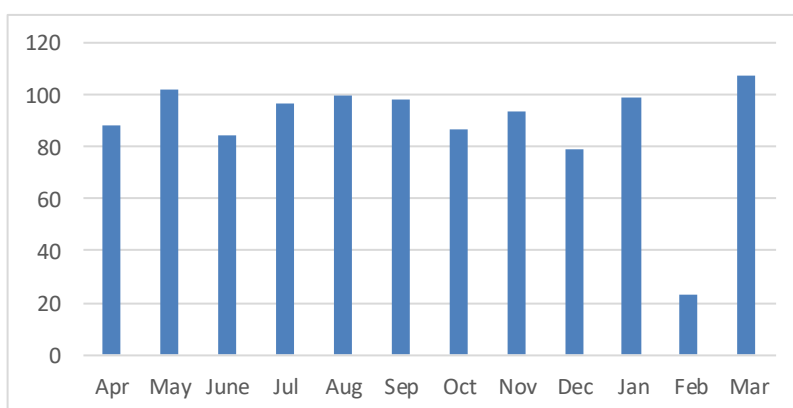
This is based on a monthly report from Gateshead Central Library detailing the number of active individual book borrowers throughout each whole month. As above, December 2022 is low as is traditional in that month, and February 2023 was severely affected by the closure for the roof repairs.



Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	1245	1354	1039	1265
2015	1411	1720	678	1522
2016	747	1744	613	650
2017	612	697	591	601
2018	569	593	539	567
2019	498	590	144	580
2020	74	40	96	80
2021	136	160	112	138
2022	147	193	40	149

Public Computer utilisation

During 2022/2023, all five of the public computers have been in use following the removal of restrictions during the previous year. The below information is based on the total hours of usage of the public computers in any one month, as recorded on the sign-in sheets, and the number of computer users.

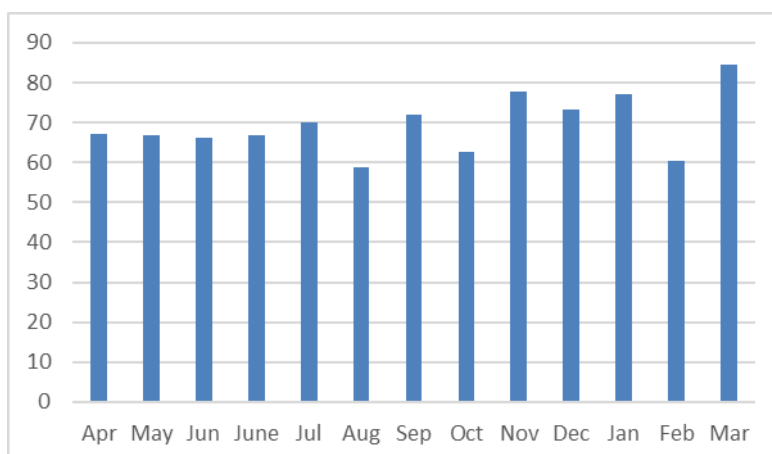


Precautions such as the continued use of keyboard covers and the availability of cleaning materials for contact items, along with signing in conducted by the library staff to avoid cross-contamination, remained in place. Usage was fairly consistent across the year, with the exception of the closure in February 2023. The figures suggest that computer usage may be on the increase, looking at the numbers for March 2023, albeit not yet to pre-Covid levels.

Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	215.0	329.0	127.0	219.0
2015	137.2	168.0	66.2	144.7
2016	173.1	221.7	138.9	163.7
2017	142.8	190.2	65.7	150.2
2018	129.5	150.3	78.2	134.5
2019	130.0	167.9	92.6	127.2
2020	16.0	22.8	4.0	22.0
2021	69.6	160.9	23.0	55.7
2022	88.3	107.2	23.2	95.1

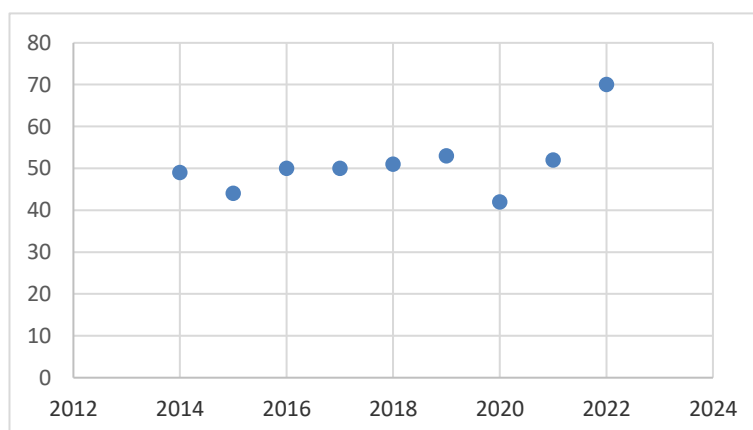
The provision of free WiFi also encourages people with their own computers or tablets to use the library space for study or leisure purposes.

The average time (in minutes) of each computer use per month is shown below:



This shows a gradual increase throughout the year in the average time spent on the public computers, for each use. The 'Warm Space' function of the library from September 2022 may have contributed to the increased timespan in the colder winter months, making users more inclined to remain in the library. There has been a significant increase in minutes per visit during this year compared with previous years, possibly due to the rise in the cost of heating encouraging some customers to spend longer in the library.

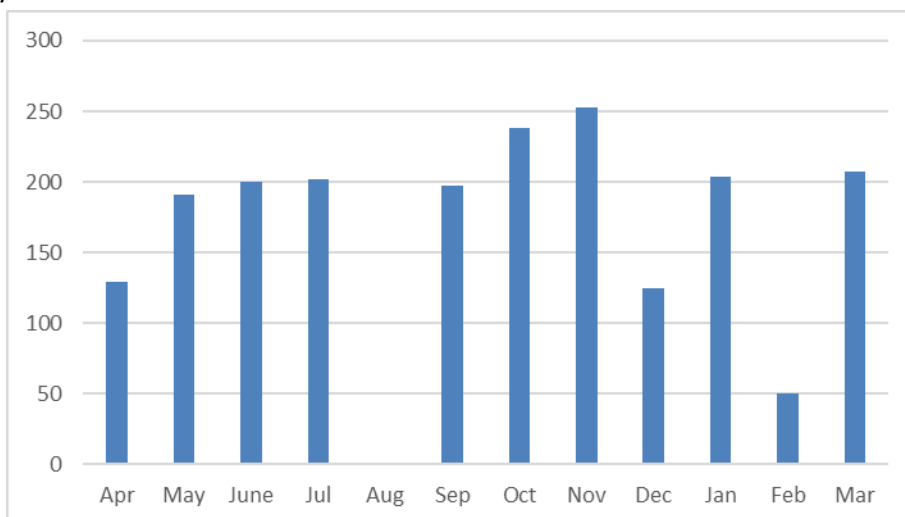
Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	49	60	39	50
2015	44	61	36	44
2016	50	56	45	50
2017	50	59	44	49
2018	51	55	45	51
2019	53	60	42	53
2020	42	48	35	44
2021	52	93	29	49
2022	70	84	59	67



Rhyme Time

Online booking for Rhyme Time remained in place during 2022 / 23, with up to ten adult places available for each session, plus up to two walk-ins.

The graph below shows the total number of children attending each month, based on the records for all sessions of Rhyme Time held each week.

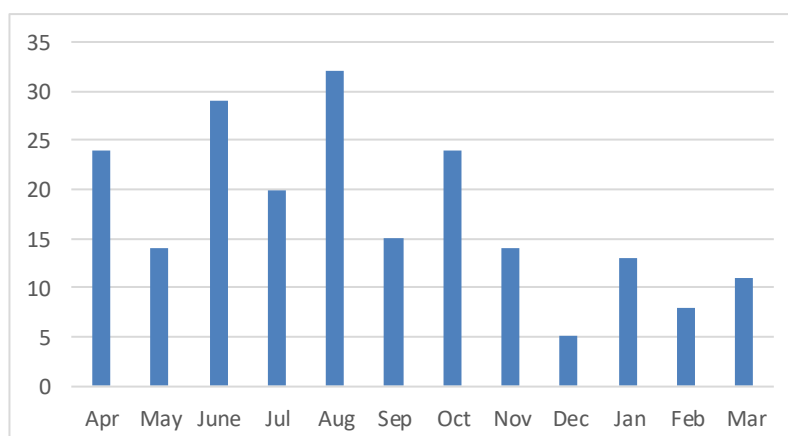


The numbers of children attending Rhyme Time has recovered to the levels seen in 2017. This has been helped by the introduction of additional sessions (as noted earlier in this report). This has assisted in spreading the numbers across the various sessions each week. There are no Rhyme Time sessions in August to give the hard-working volunteers a well-deserved break! December is traditionally a poor month and sessions were restricted in February 2023, with the closure for the roof repairs.

Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	127.7	215	59	116.0
2015	183.6	246	109	192.0
2016	179.7	206	119	188.5
2017	181.5	218	100	189.0
2018	147.6	175	94	155.0
2019	155.0	212	76	163.0
2020	0	0	0	0
2021	129.2	184	43	147.5
2022	181.5	253	50	200.0

New members

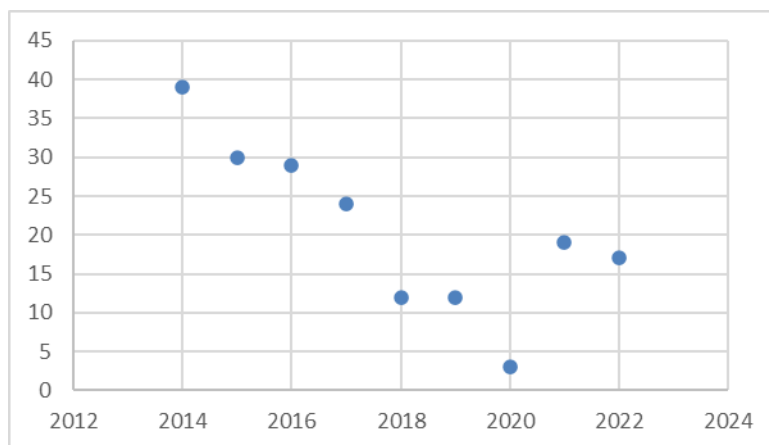
The library has continued to sign up new members, as shown below. This is based on the register used to record whether or not the new member has agreed to receive library marketing information. These figures are less reliable than in previous years when membership sheets were printed and counted.



The downward trend throughout the year is noticeable, together with the usual seasonal variations; the exception being the figures for February 2023 when the library had very limited opening, but still managed to register a number of new members.

Year	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Median
2014	39	63	11	38
2015	30	43	7	29
2016	29	44	15	30
2017	24	41	11	23
2018	12	18	7	12
2019	12	19	7	11
2020	3	10	0	2
2021	19	37	3	16
2022	17	32	5	15

Historical figures show a decline in new members joining the library, but, following on from the pandemic, interest in joining the library appears to have stabilised at a slightly higher level than the two years before Covid-19.



Citizens Advice sessions

Citizens Advice (CA) has been using the library since September 13th 2022. After the first five months (to be expected whilst word of the service spreads), CA reported the following:

- 19 clients supported through the drop-in facility, with a range of issues requiring help including Welfare Benefit advice, support with debt and signposting to organisations that can help with relationships and family matters.
- A wide range of ages have made use of the drop-in, from 15 to 89, with 75% of these being over 45 years old.
- The split between male and female is roughly 50/50.
- 80% of the clients supported have a long-term health condition, indicating that the service is very accessible to vulnerable clients, thereby meeting one of the key objectives of the service that is being provided.

This information was updated in July 2023 when CA advised that 36 clients had been supported via the library drop-in and appointments service. The split of these was 55% male, 45% female, with the largest number helped in the 55-59 age range. A slight majority of clients (54%) had long-term health condition with the remainder reporting as not disabled or having any health problems. A total of 234 issues had been raised by clients, the majority of which related to benefits, Universal Credit and Personal

Independence Payments. Other key issues addressed by the service related to debt, financial services, family / relationships and housing.

Summary

Clients	36
Quick client contacts	
Issues	234
Activities	125
Cases	39

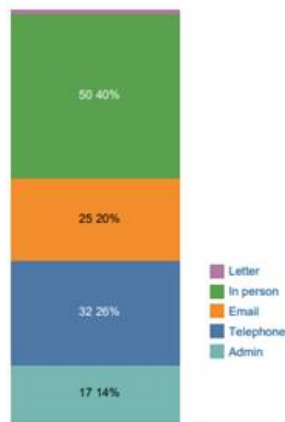
Outcomes

Income gain	£3,541
Re-imbursments, services, loans	£25
Other	£0

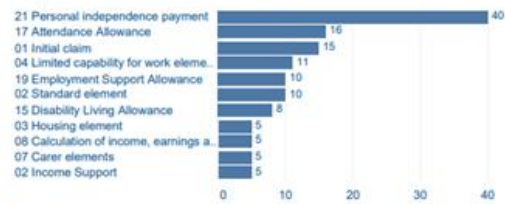
Issues

Issues	Clients
Benefits & tax credits	25
Benefits Universal Credit	12
Debt	9
Financial services & capability	5
Relationships & family	6
Housing	6
Health & community care	4
Employment	3
Legal	4
Consumer goods & services	3
Education	2
Travel & transport	1
Immigration & asylum	1
Charitable Support & Food Ban...	1
Grand Total	234

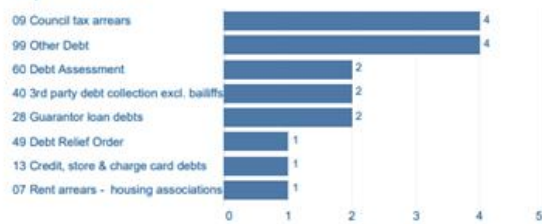
Channel



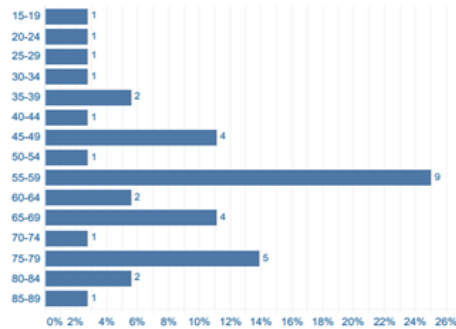
Top benefit issues



Top debt issues



Age



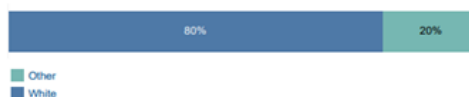
Gender



Disability / Long-term health



Ethnicity



Other information

Craft sessions for children during the various school holidays were reinstated and the total number of children attending these throughout the year was 87.

No work experience students were taken on; this was due to the age profile of the staff coupled with the increased risk of students carrying the virus, making the risks of close contact too great.

Five customers were given advice on their CVs with two receiving interview coaching. Two of these are known to have obtained employment within a short time period, with no feedback from the others.

School visits were reinstated with regular visits from the Cedars School. The pupils borrow books on a staff ticket and are controlled by the staff of the school. Throughout the year there were 375 children who visited the library from the Cedars School.

Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers, and has offset those volunteers retiring due to personal reasons by adding a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library's processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer brings to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance. An induction into the library (and Association) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this.

After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns. The library holds regular meetings for all volunteers to attend, where strategic policy and operational issues are amongst the matters discussed and agreed.



Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Email lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk or talk to anyone on the library desk.

Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

The Association holds regular meetings with trustees (elected by the members at the Association's AGM) and members (volunteers), at which policy matters and other major decisions (such as agreeing the annual budget) are discussed and agreed. Trustee meetings are held on a six-week cycle with day to day management carried out by the officers, in accordance with policies and decisions that have been previously agreed by members and trustees. Advice from the Charity Commission, including on rules and

regulations, guides trustees and the Council's Library Service provides advice and assistance in relation to the building fabric and library matters.

An 'Activities Group' of Association members meets on a regular basis to plan and oversee the programme of activities at the library and reports back to the trustees and the Association as a whole.

Finances

In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various Government grants and donations have enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2022/2023. These included monies from The National Community Fund and the Local Community Fund, enabling the library to run a range of activities during the year.



A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tubs on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle).

Reserves policy

The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

Statement of accounts

This is attached as a separate document.

Business plan

The Association's three year business plan for the period 2016-2019 is now behind us and is in the process of review and revision in anticipation of a resumption of some sort of post-Covid normality.

In conclusion

After over ten years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

Low Fell Library Association

Registered Charity No. 1153726

**Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

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Notes to the Accounts	Pages 7 - 8

Charity Name: Low Fell Library Association

Charity No: 1153726

Registered Office:
710a Durham Road
Low Fell
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6HT

Trustees:
Frank Hindle (Chair)*
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)
Brenda Buxton (Treasurer) (Resigned as Treasurer 26/10/2022)
Terence Wileman (Health and Safety Officer)
Ross Brown (Vice Health & Safety Officer)
Christine Blue (Resigned 26/10/2022)
Elsie Neville
Angela Joynes (Resigned 21/6/2022)
Catherine Underwood (Resigned 23/6/2022)
June Hessewood
Janet Lowe (From 1/4/22 resigned 29/11/2022)
Alyson Barratt (From 16/10/2022)
Jennifer Johnson (From 16/10/22)

(*) Trustee has taken on Treasurer responsibilities from 27/10/2022 until a replacement is found.

Independent Examiner:
Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
44 Witton Drive
Spennymoor
Co. Durham
DL16 6LU

Bankers:
Lloyds Bank PLC
11-12 The Shopping Village
Kingsway
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0EN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the Trustees	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
Charity No	1153726
On the accounts for period ended	31 March 2023
Set out on pages	5-8

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view,' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

D W Thompson

Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
44 Witton Drive
Spennymoor
Co. Durham DL16 6LU

Date: 4/8/2023

Low Fell Library Association

Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023

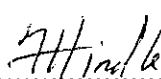
	Notes	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2023 £	2022 £
Receipts					
Grants & Donations	4	11,600.00	572.00	12,172.00	16,678.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	3,912.00	3,912.00	350.00
Library Takings		-	2,143.00	2,143.00	2,917.00
Other Income		-	1,732.00	1,732.00	14.00
Bank Interest		-	92.00	92.00	4.00
Total Receipts		11,600.00	8,451.00	20,051.00	19,963.00
Payments					
Library & Community Events		600.00	1,185.00	1,785.00	125.00
Library Running Costs	5	662.00	11,617.00	12,279.00	8,492.00
Office & General Expenses	6	305.00	191.00	496.00	3,750.00
Volunteer Costs		-	71.00	71.00	582.00
Governance costs	7	-	835.00	835.00	887.00
Course costs		-	-	-	18.00
Donations		-	149.00	149.00	173.00
Kitchen refurbishment		-	-	-	2,772.00
Banking charges		-	-	-	79.00
Miscellaneous		33.00	172.00	205.00	
Total payments		1,600.00	14,220.00	15,820.00	16,878.00
Surplus/Deficit for the period		10,000.00	(5,769.00)	4,231.00	3,085.00
Total funds brought forward 1st April 2022:		-	51,518.00	51,518.00	48,433.00
Transfer between funds:		-	-	-	-
Total funds carried forward 31st March 2023:		10,000.00	45,749.00	55,749.00	51,518.00

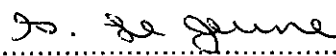
,

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 March 2023**

		2023	2022
	Notes	£	£
Current assets:			
Cash at bank and in hand		55,749.00	51,455.00
Donations received still to bank		-	63.00
Total current assets:	8	55,749.00	51,518.00
Current liabilities:			
Total current liabilities:		-	-
Net assets:		55,749.00	51,518.00
Represented by:			
Restricted reserves		10,000.00	-
Unrestricted reserves		45,749.00	51,518.00
Total funds:	9	55,749.00	51,518.00

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Board of Trustees:

Signed:  Position: CHAIR

Signed:  Position: SECRETARY

Low Fell Library Association

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2023

1	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
2	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9th September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
3	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
4	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £600.00 - Gateshead Council (Local Community Fund) • £1,000.00 – Gateshead Council (Warm Spaces Programme) • £10,000.00 – The National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All)
5	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £3,251.00 - Electricity • £4,378.00 – Gas • £302.00 - Water • £4,216.00 – Recharge to Gateshead Council • £132.00 – Music licence
6	<p>This includes items such as publicity, furnishings, and small items of equipment.</p>
7	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £544.00 – Insurance • £275.00 – Accountancy fee • £16.00 – Accounting software

8	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash at bank and in hand as at 31st March 2023 - £55,749.00.
9	<p>This includes:</p> <p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p> <p><i>Restricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity for a specific purpose as agreed with the funder.</p>

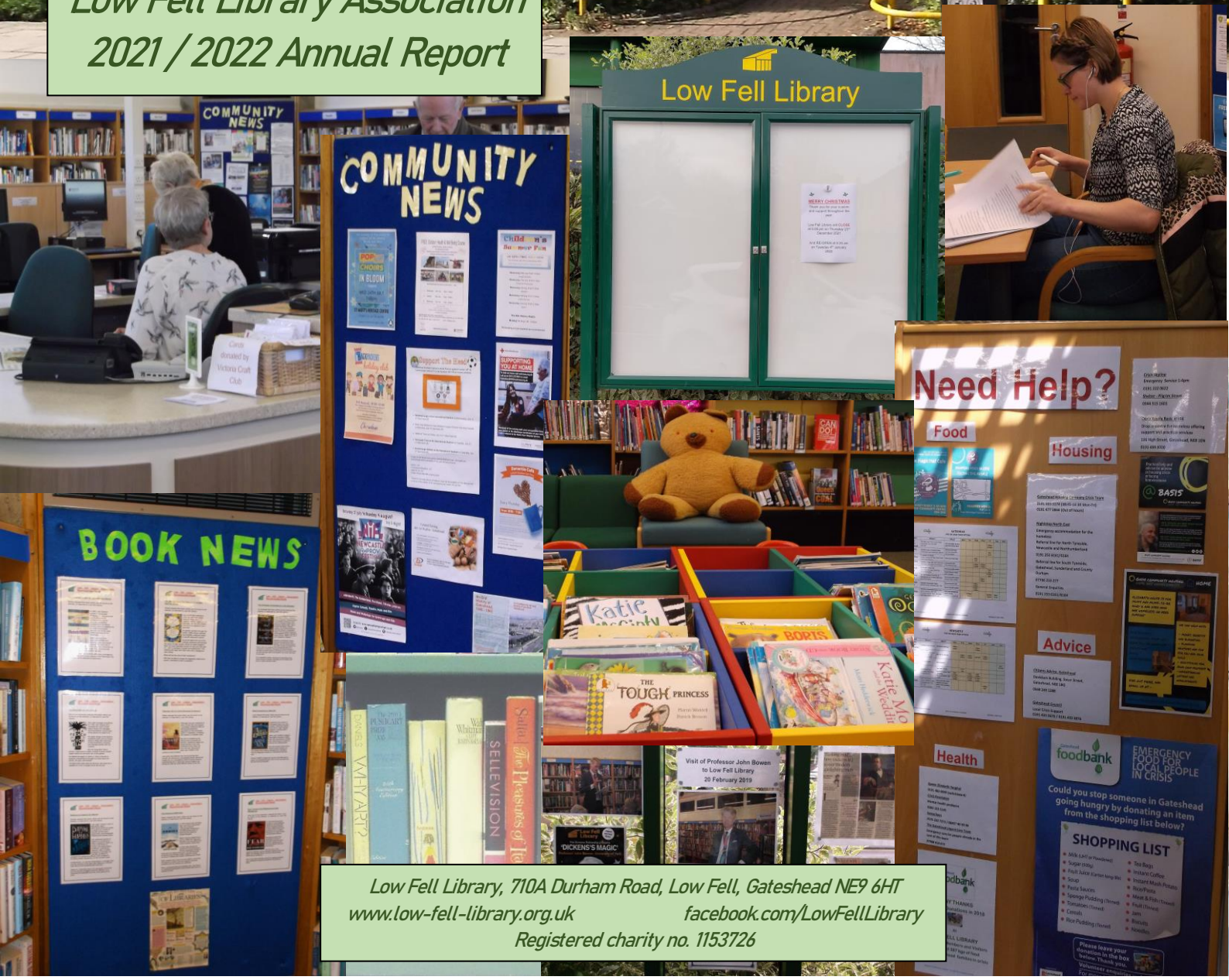
LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1153726

Accounts

A year at Low Fell's Community Library

Low Fell Library Association
2021 / 2022 Annual Report



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT
www.low-fell-library.org.uk facebook.com/LowFellLibrary
Registered charity no. 1153726



telephone: 0191 433 6408

email: lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk

LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the ninth annual report from Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who keep Low Fell Library going.

2021/2022 has been almost as strange a year for the library as 2020-2021, a result of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. The library was closed at the start of the year, re-opening for limited browsing over reduced opening hours, on 10th April 2021. Regrettably, activities such as Rhyme Time remained out of service for the first part of this year, recommencing in October 2021. Our dedicated team of volunteers nevertheless remained committed to providing whatever service was allowed and at the time of writing we are back fully open with a new offering of events and activities, alongside our regular library service.

The library obtained a renewed, five year lease agreement with the Council, commencing April 2022, so hopefully we will be around for some time to come.

As ever, thanks must go to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library and ensuring that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

Some comments from our library customers:

It's great that the library is open again!

Library customer

The Rhyme Time sessions at the library are great!

Library customers

We love coming to the library, there's a great children's area

Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

Low Fell Library, 2021/ 2022

Introduction

At the start of the 2021 / 2022 year, the persistence of Covid-19 variants continued to influence the service being provided by the library. The library re-opened to the public for limited browsing only, in early April 2021, with a break in opening hours in the middle of the day to allow for sanitising between shifts. Photocopying continued other than during complete lockdowns and the library computers also returned for use by the public, albeit for only three of the five stations, to allow for social distancing. Mask wearing remained in place, there were no newspapers or refreshments and Track and Trace was in operation for visitors to the library. Room hire remained unavailable, as was tutoring or other informal use of the library tables. Contact between trustees and volunteers nevertheless continued during 2021 / 22, including holding the AGM, thanks to the option of Zoom calls!

In June 2021 normal opening hours resumed and have remained in place since then.

Events unfortunately remained largely cancelled as a result of Covid-19 until December, when the library held a Christmas coffee morning. Normality was more or less resumed with the Easter coffee morning at the start of April 2022. Rhyme Time started again in October 2021, followed by the Bridge Club (in February 2022) and Knit and Natter group.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners, our thanks to them for their ongoing commitment.



The library renovated the staff kitchen with a new sink unit as well as installing more cupboards and repainted the kitchen walls in a more soothing colour than the previous purple décor! The Association also purchased an air filtration unit in order to enable the Community Room to be used more safely, and after gaining planning permission, installed an external noticeboard to allow better advertising of the library events, opening hours and so on. During the year, the Council was required to mend various leaks to the roof of the main building and the foyer; hopefully these have now been resolved.

Quarantining of books remained in place until late September 2021.

During the year, the library also acquired containers for recycling of used batteries and empty printer ink cartridges; these are located in the foyer and main library respectively.



Events in the library in 2021 / 2022:

The library ran a 'Summer Reading Challenge' during the summer holidays, together with a pre-school reading challenge, rewarded with stickers and certificates. Forty-one children signed up to the Summer Reading Challenge, with thirteen completing this; all the children who completed the challenges were rewarded with a £20 national book token.

A Christmas coffee morning along with a small number of stalls took place in December 2021, this was very well supported by the local community, all of whom seemed glad to be back in the library.



An Easter coffee morning, with stalls and children's crafts took place on April 2nd 2022. This was once again very well supported.



Library usage statistics for 2021 / 2022:

Library usage got off to a slow start at the time of re-opening in early April 2021, but footfall and usage has progressed since then, with a gradual increase in numbers over the course of the year. Visitor numbers and library usage are improving and the library continues to attract new customers on a weekly basis.

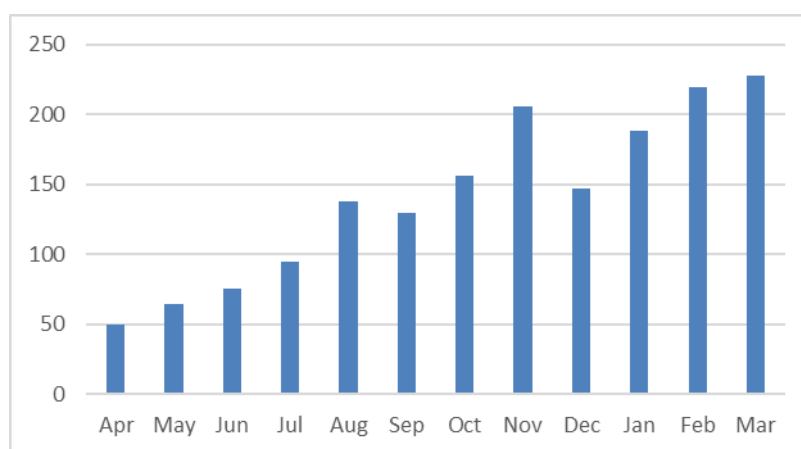
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2021 / 2022 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2021 / 2022	2020 / 2021
Total hours during the year when the library was open	1689.5	525.5
Mean weekly footfall	141.6	16.0
Mean computer hours per month	52	42
Mean new members per month	17	3
Mean numbers of Rhyme Time attendees per month	73.3	0

Footfall

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured by a tally chart recorded in the second week of each month. Recording of footfall was carried out more frequently after the library reopened in early April 2021.

The footfall figures for 2021/2022 are shown below. Visitor numbers have been understandably limited at times by the restrictions placed upon the library service by Government and local Council Regulations relating to the control of Covid-19.



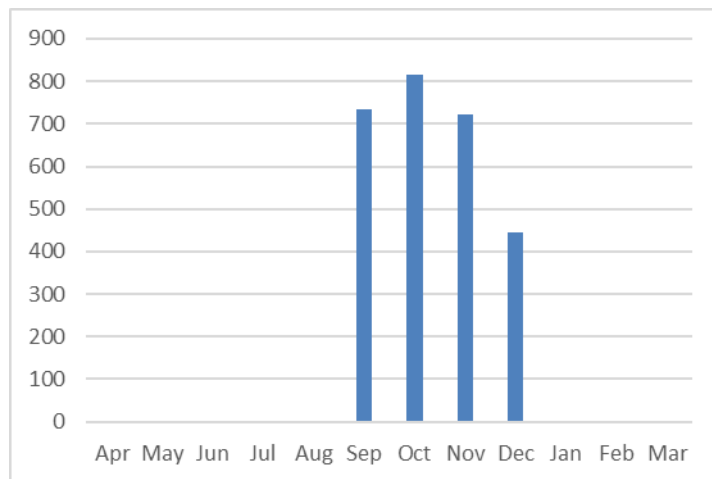
Not only were available hours for library visitors reduced, but the services able to be provided were also severely restricted, with no group activities, restricted (and sometimes no) computer use, and limited or no book browsing.

Borrowing of books

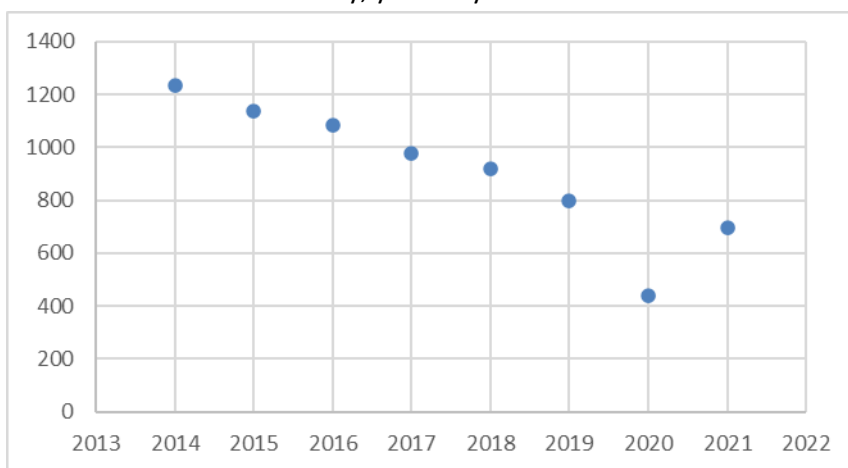
The information provided in the graph below is based on a monthly report provided by Gateshead Central Library, detailing the books borrowed throughout the month. The availability of data for this fiscal year has been limited as a result of the restricted operation and staff shortages over the course of the year.

There has been a progressive decline in the average number of books borrowed year on year at a national level and the figures for borrowing of books from Low Fell Library appear consistent with that trend (see the second graph, below).

Monthly numbers of books borrowed:

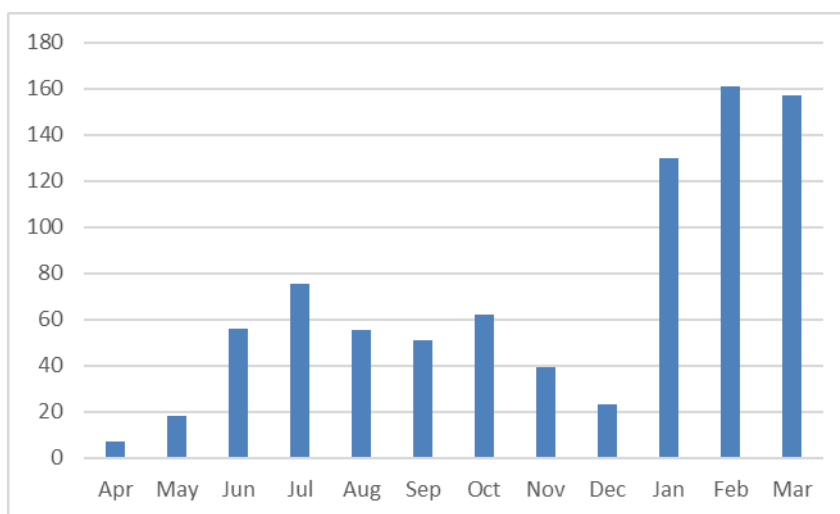


Average numbers of books borrowed monthly, year on year:

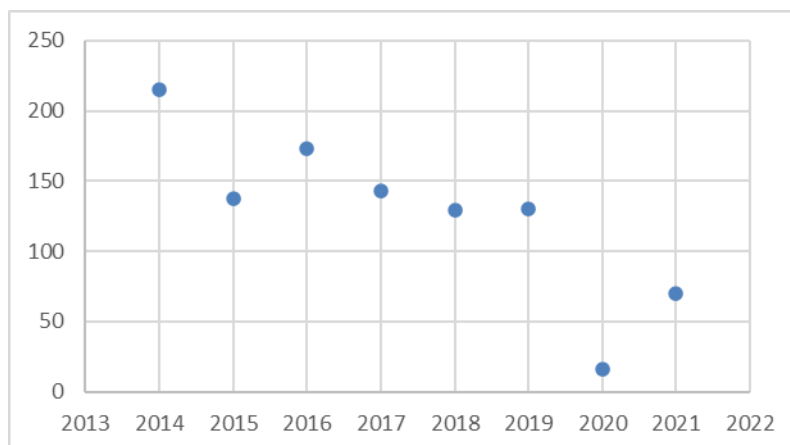


Public Computer utilisation

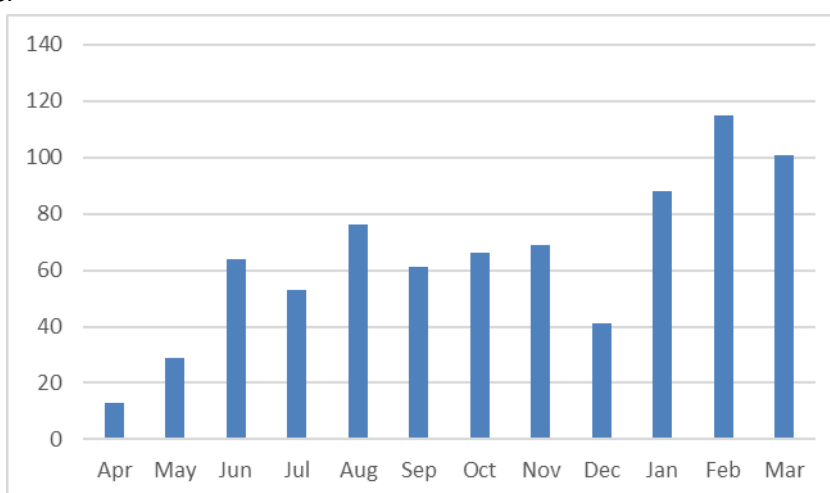
During 2021/2022, only three of the five public computers have been in use. The below information is based on the total hours of usage of the three public computers in any one month, as recorded on the sign-in sheets, and the number of computer users.



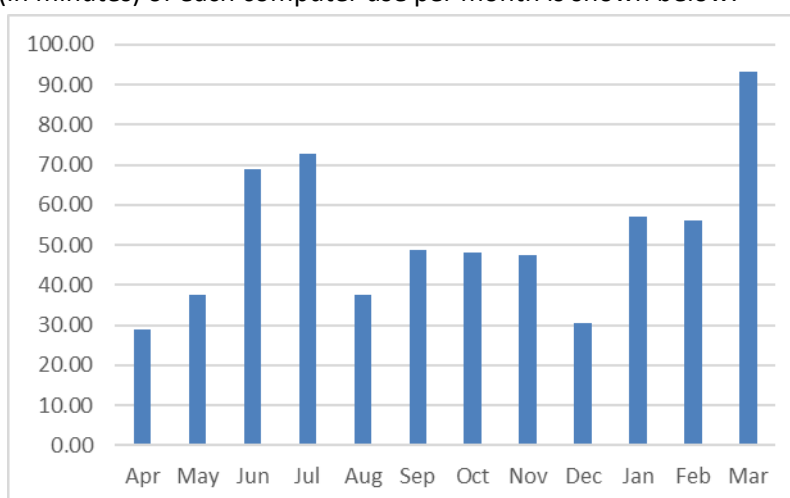
Computer usage was greatly reduced during 2021 / 22 due to controlled availability. Prior to Covid, usage had stabilised and there is a trend to recover that level.



Looking at the number of computer uses throughout the year, month by month, there has been a steady increase (as seen in the graph below) and as the number of computers available is now back to five, it is hoped that this trend will continue. The wi-fi provision within the library does encourage people to use their own computers and tablets, though the restricted seating capacity during this period went against this.

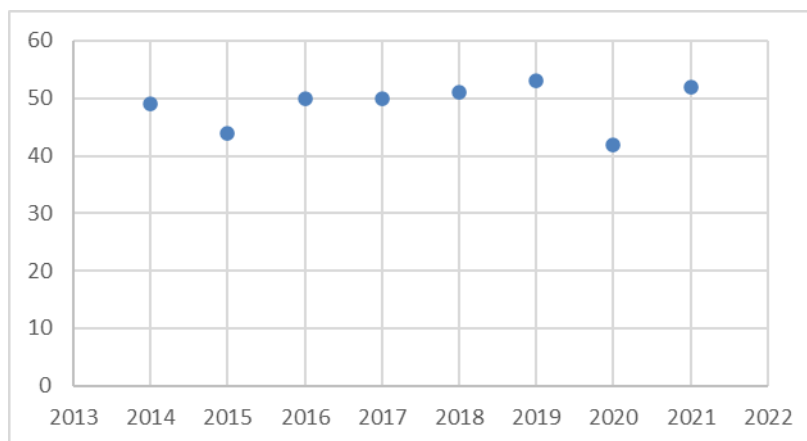


The average time (in minutes) of each computer use per month is shown below:



This would appear to show an irregular increase in the average usage time, offsetting the decline in utilisation.

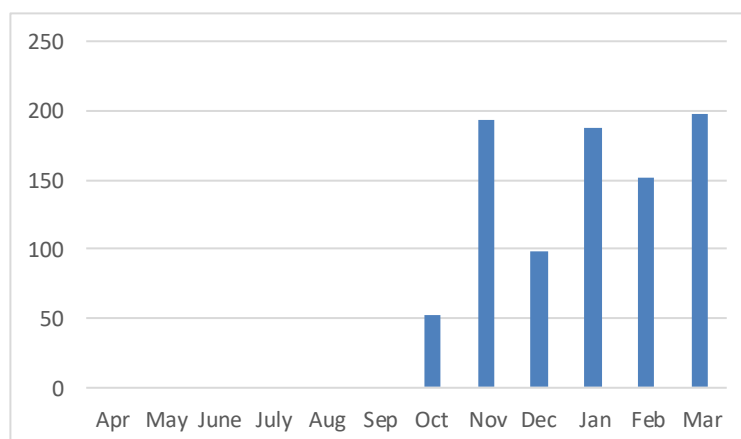
With the relaxation in restrictions on the use of computers in the library, the average time for computer use returned to pre-Covid levels:



Rhyme Time

Rhyme Time sessions recommenced in October 2021 as the Covid-19 restrictions eased. The library introduced additional sessions to compensate for the reduced numbers of adults permitted at any one session and these have assisted in maintaining numbers of attendees. Online booking was encouraged with up to ten adult places available for each session, plus up to two walk-ins.

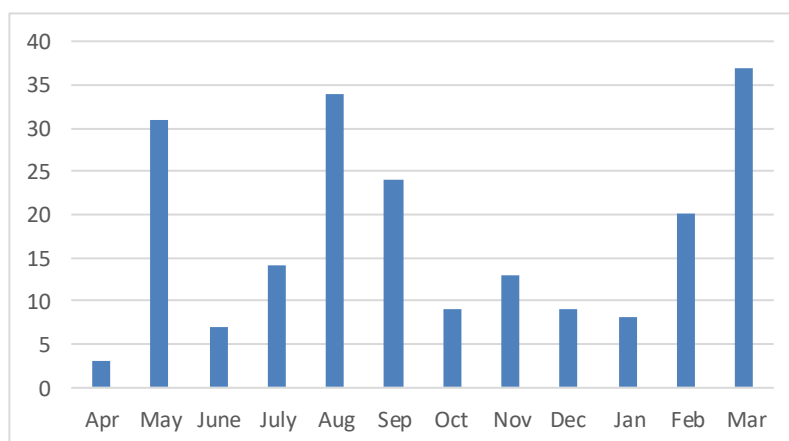
The graph below shows the total number of children attending each month, based on the records for all sessions of Rhyme Time held each week.



New members

The library has continued to sign up new members since it reopened in April 2021, as shown below. This is based on the register used to record whether or not the new member has agreed to receive library marketing information. These figures are likely to be less reliable than in previous years when membership sheets were printed off and therefore able to be counted.

The marked variation between months can be attributed to changes in the operational rules during Covid. Peaks have resulted from opportunities for an increase in customer numbers, as well as GDPR resulting in customer records being deleted and, therefore, needing to re-register.



Other information

Regrettably there have been no children’s craft sessions, work experience students, school visits or other such activities during 2021 / 2022 as a result of the slow return to ‘normality’ following the Covid-19 restrictions placed on the library and other public and education services. It is anticipated that these activities will recommence in the 2022 / 2023 year. Two customers were given advice on their CV and both obtained employment immediately afterwards.

Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers, and to have added to this with a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library’s processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer brings to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance. An induction into the library (and Association) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this. After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns. The library holds regular meetings for all volunteers to attend, where strategic policy and operational issues are amongst the matters discussed and agreed.



Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we’d be very pleased to hear from you. Email info@low-fell-library.org.uk, or talk to anyone on the library desk.

Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with

Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

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In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various Government grants and donations have enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2021/2022.



A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tub on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle) or Treasurer (Brenda Buxton).

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The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

Statement of accounts

This is attached as a separate document.

Business plan

The Association's three year business plan for the period 2016-2019 is now behind us and is in the process of review and revision in anticipation of a resumption of some sort of post-Covid normality.

In conclusion

After over nine years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

Customer impressions of Low Fell Library ...

While it is often difficult to capture direct quotes from our customers, the following is a flavour of how they feel about Low Fell Library:

- *One customer recently said that Low Fell was a lovely traditional library and that she found some of the bigger libraries rather impersonal.*
- *Several of our adult customers have told us they are so glad we are still open and remember coming to Low Fell Library as children.*
- *We are often told by customers that they find Low Fell Library a friendly place to visit.*
- *Recently we had a woman who came into the library, to use the public computers, who didn't realise it was run by volunteers. After chatting at length with the staff on duty she joined the library and said she would be coming back with her elderly mother, who enjoys reading and who would find Low Fell Library more accessible than a larger library.*
- *One of our outside stall holders, who regularly comes to our Christmas and Easter Fairs (and post pandemic coffee mornings) said recently that these were the best events she attended, as a stall holder, all year.*

Low Fell Library Association

Registered Charity No. 1153726

**Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2022**

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Charity Name: Low Fell Library Association

Charity No: 1153726

Registered Office:
710a Durham Road
Low Fell
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6HT

Trustees:
Frank Hindle (Chair)
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)
Brenda Buxton (Treasurer)
Terence Wileman (Health and Safety Officer)
Ross Brown (Vice Health & Safety Officer)
Christine Blue
Elsie Neville
Angela Joynes
Catherine Underwood
June Hesslewood

Independent Examiner:
Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
44 Witton Drive
Spennymoor
Co. Durham
DL16 6LU

Bankers:
Lloyds Bank PLC
11-12 The Shopping Village
Kingsway
Team Valley Trading Estate
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE11 0EN

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the Trustees	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
Charity No	1153726
On the accounts for period ended	31 March 2022
Set out on pages	5-8

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view', and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

D W Thompson

Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
44 Witton Drive
Spennymoor
Co. Durham DL16 6LU

Date: 3/10/2022

Low Fell Library Association

Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022

	Notes	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2022 £	2021 £
Receipts					
Grants & Donations	4	-	16,678.00	16,678.00	27,155.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	350.00	350.00	-
Library Takings		-	2,917.00	2,917.00	212.00
Other Income		-	14.00	14.00	256.00
Bank Interest		-	4.00	4.00	11.00
Total Receipts		-	19,963.00	19,963.00	27,634.00
Payments					
Library & Community Events		-	125.00	125.00	-
Library Running Costs	5	-	8,492.00	8,492.00	10,742.00
Office & General Expenses	6	-	3,750.00	3,750.00	504.00
Volunteer Costs		-	582.00	582.00	54.00
Governance costs	7	-	887.00	887.00	869.00
Course costs		18.00	-	18.00	-
Donations		-	173.00	173.00	154.00
Kitchen refurbishment		2,081.00	691.00	2,772.00	-
Banking charges		-	79.00	79.00	-
Total payments		2,099.00	14,779.00	16,878.00	12,323.00
Surplus/Deficit for the period		(2,099.00)	5,184.00	3,085.00	15,311.00
Total funds brought forward 1st April 2021:		2,096.00	46,337.00	48,433.00	33,122.00
Transfer between funds:		3.00	(3.00)	-	-
Total funds carried forward 31st March 2022:		-	51,518.00	51,518.00	48,433.00

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**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 March 2022**

	Notes	2022 £	2021 £
Current assets:			
Cash at bank and in hand		51,455.00	48,433.00
Donations received still to bank		63.00	-
Total current assets:	8	51,518.00	48,433.00
Current liabilities:			
Cheques still to clear		-	18.00
Accrual for late invoices		-	4,435.00
Total current liabilities:		-	4,453.00
Net assets:		51,518.00	43,980.00
Represented by:			
Restricted reserves		-	2,096.00
Unrestricted reserves		51,518.00	41,884.00
Total funds:	9	51,518.00	43,980.00

The financial statements were approved by the following members of the Board of Trustees:

Signed: *S. de Jure* Position: SECRETARY

Signed: *A. Hindle* Position: CHAIR

Low Fell Library Association

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2022

1	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
2	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9th September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
3	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
4	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £16,000.00 - Gateshead Council Re-Start grant • £678.00 – Donations
5	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £1,910.00 - Electricity • £1,480.000 – Gas • £218.00 - Water • £3,262.00 – Recharge to Gateshead Council • £48 – Music licence • £1,574.00 – Library signage and notice boards
6	<p>This includes items such as stationery, cleaning, storage, small items of equipment and miscellaneous costs.</p>
7	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £577.00 – Insurance • £275.00 – Accountancy fee • £35.00 – ICO registration

<p>8</p>	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash at bank and in hand - £51,455 • Donations received to be banked £63.00
<p>9</p>	<p>This includes:</p> <p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i></p> <p>Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p>

LOW FELL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

England & Wales - Charity number 1153726

Accounts

A year at Low Fell's Community Library

Low Fell Library Association 2020 / 2021 Annual Report



Low Fell Library, 710A Durham Road, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 6HT
www.low-fell-library.org.uk facebook.com/LowFellLibrary
Registered charity no. 1153726



telephone: 0191 433 6408

email: lowfelllibrary@gateshead.gov.uk

LOW FELL LIBRARY – ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

Introduction from the Chair

Welcome to the eighth annual report from Low Fell Library Association, which is made up of the volunteers who keep Low Fell Library going.

2020/2021 has been an unusual year for the library as a result of Covid-19, with the library closed for much of the time, in line with Government and Council guidelines on Covid-secure working, and limited opening for the provision of a Ring and Read service at other times. Regrettably, activities such as RhymeTime and Knit and Natter had to cease for the whole of the period. Our dedicated team of volunteers nevertheless remained committed to providing whatever service was allowed and at the time of writing we are looking forward to re-opening with a new offering of events and activities, alongside our regular library service, as soon as circumstances allow.

As ever, thanks must go to all the volunteers and trustees who give so much time and energy to running the library and ensuring that residents in Low Fell and beyond have a thriving local community library.

Frank Hindle – Chair, Low Fell Library Association

Some comments from our library customers:

I've missed the library when it's not been open

Library customer

The library provided a lifeline of support during Covid

Library customers

I find the staff very helpful and pleasant, it's a pleasure to use

Low Fell Library Association

Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (charity registration number 1153726) and is made up from the volunteers who run Low Fell Community Library. We work with Gateshead Council and other organisations to deliver a community library service and to ensure that the library building and facilities continue to provide public benefit to the surrounding communities.

The formal statement of the Charity's objectives, as set out in our Constitution, is:

- To advance education by the provision of a library facility and service and other educational community resources and activities for Low Fell inhabitants and the surrounding areas.
- To further benefit the said inhabitants without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or any other opinions by associating together the said inhabitants and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation, leisure time, occupation with the object of improving the conditions of life for the residents.

Low Fell Library, 2020/ 2021

Introduction

At the start of the 2020 / 2021 year, none of us could have predicted how the year would pan out, with the library closed more than open, and even when open it was often only able to offer a reduced service of Ring and Read, and occasional opportunities for photocopying. Contact between trustees and with volunteers nevertheless continued during 2020 / 21 thanks to the option of Zoom calls!

Events were unfortunately all cancelled as a result of Covid-19, as were the usual activities of Rhymetime, Knit and Natter, scrabble, bridge and the meetings of the Book Club.

Throughout the past year our library garden has been beautifully maintained by the volunteers from Low Fell Gardeners. During the pandemic they planted daffodils for us in memory of our colleague, Brian Nicholls, who sadly passed away in 2020.



In March / April 2021 Low Fell Library Association purchased twenty new bestsellers in preparation for our opening for limited browsing, on 12th April 2021.



As a result of the Covid-19 restrictions placed upon us, this annual report is shorter than usual. We hope to get back to offering a more comprehensive service to our local community as soon as circumstances, and guidelines, permit.

Library usage statistics for 2020 / 2021:

The extensive restrictions imposed by the legislation introduced in relation to Covid-19 have greatly restricted the services able to be provided by the library which at times was required to close completely.

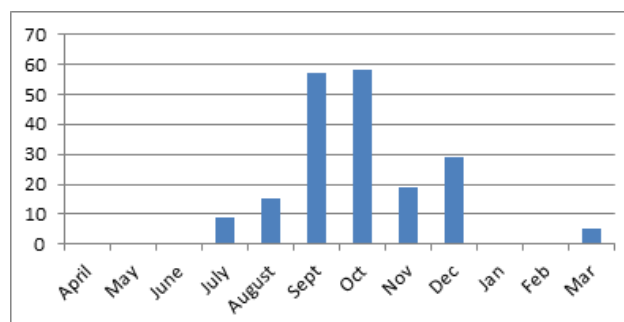
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2020 / 2021 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	2020 / 2021	2019 / 2020
Total hours during the year when the library was open	525.5	1730.0
Mean weekly footfall	16.0	294.4
Mean computer hours per month	4.1	130.0
Mean new members per month	3	12

Footfall

This is based on the number of visitors per week measured by a tally chart recorded in the second week of each month.

The footfall figures for 2020/2021 are shown below. Visitor numbers have been understandably limited by the restrictions placed upon the library service by Government and local Council Regulations relating to the control of Covid-19.



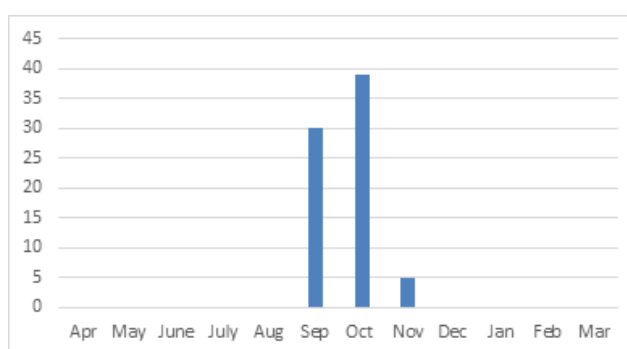
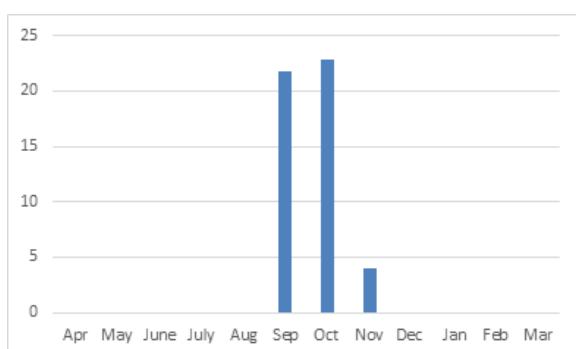
Not only were available hours for library visitors reduced, but the services able to be provided were also severely restricted, with no group activities, restricted (and sometimes no) computer use, and limited or no book browsing.

Borrowing of books

No information is available on the numbers of books borrowed during 2020/2021 due to restricted staff availability within the Council library service.

Public Computer utilisation

The below information is based on the total hours of usage of all five public computers in any one month, as recorded on the sign-in sheets, and the number of computer users. The library was only open for computer use during three of the twelve months in 2020/2021. Whilst WiFi provision has been available throughout the year, the removal of furniture to enable social distancing and discourage people from remaining in the library for any length of time, has meant that members of the public were unable to use this facility.

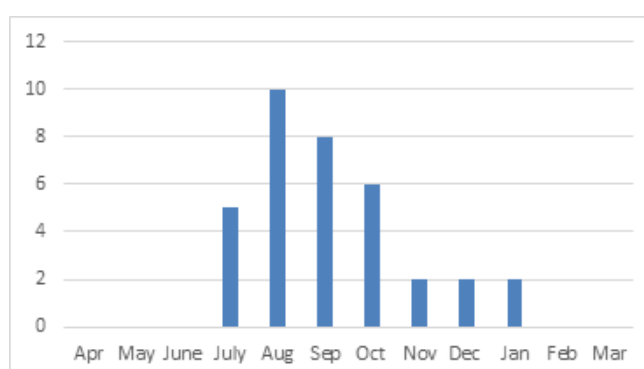


Rhymetime

No Rhymetime sessions were held during the 2020 / 2021 period, due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

New members

The library has continued to sign up new members, as shown by the table below, though it should be noted that these figures will be less reliable than those of previous years, as membership sheets were not always printed during 2020 / 2021.



Other information

Regrettably there have been no craft sessions, work experience students, assistance with employability, school visits or other activities during 2020 / 2021 as a result of the Covid-19 restrictions placed on the library and other public and education services.

Volunteering at Low Fell Library

Low Fell Library has been fortunate to continue to be supported by an enthusiastic and hard-working team of volunteers, and to have added to this with a number of like-minded people over the past year. These people work behind the desk during their library shifts and some carry out more specialist tasks including social media, publicity and marketing, and general administration. We are extremely grateful to everyone who helps at the library, whether this is briefly or long-term.

New volunteers are eased into the library's processes and procedures, starting with an introductory meeting with two or three of the key officers, to discuss the skills, experience and interests the volunteer brings to the library, and how, when and where they can best be of assistance. An induction into the library (and Association) operation is provided, together with information on our standards, the service agreement with Gateshead Council, health and safety and safeguarding practices and procedures. Training on the Soprano (library book issuing) system is provided for volunteers working on the desk, and DBS clearance obtained for those whose role requires this. After a few weeks the new volunteers have the opportunity to discuss, in confidence, any issues or concerns. The library holds regular meetings for all volunteers to attend, where strategic policy and operational issues are amongst the matters discussed and agreed.



Anyone who is interested in joining us to help in any way is asked to get in touch – we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Email info@low-fell-library.org.uk, or talk to anyone on the library desk.

Governance

Low Fell Library Association operates under a constitution approved by the Charity Commission. The provision of a core, community library service is done in accordance with a service agreement with Gateshead Council and via a rent-free lease agreement for the building, the maintenance of which remains the responsibility of the Council.

The Association holds regular meetings with trustees (elected by the members at the Association's AGM) and members (volunteers), at which policy matters and other major decisions (such as agreeing the annual budget) are discussed and agreed. Trustee meetings are held on a six-week cycle with day to day management carried out by the officers, in accordance with policies and decisions that have been previously agreed by members and trustees. Advice from the Charity Commission, including on rules and regulations, guides trustees and the Council's Library Service provides advice and assistance in relation to the building fabric and library matters.

An 'Activities Group' of Association members ordinarily meets on a regular basis to plan and oversee the programme of activities at the library and reports back to the trustees and the Association as a whole.

Finances

In addition to the donations of time and effort made by library volunteers, the operation of the library continues to require funding. Gateshead Council's contributions to the library running costs ceased in 2015, but various grants and donations enabled the library to meet its bills and other spending commitments over the course of 2019/20, and through to the following year (2020/21).



A steady inflow of funds is needed to plan for the future and enable the library to continue to function and as such, all donations – large and small – are welcome and will help with this.

Donations can be made via the 'donations' tub on the library desk or via the library website. If you want to know more about the library's financial needs, or would like your donation to be used for a specific purpose, please ask to speak to the Chair (Frank Hindle) or Treasurer (Brenda Buxton).

Reserves policy

The Association maintains an unrestricted reserve equivalent to six months of core operating costs (this currently equates to a reserve of £7,500.00). If it becomes necessary to draw on this reserve, the trustees will urgently review the situation and identify potential actions that could be taken to rectify the position. This six month period ensures that there is time to either seek additional funding, or (if that is not possible) to wind up the Association in an orderly manner, meeting any obligations and commitments, were that to prove necessary.

Statement of accounts

This is attached as a separate document.

Business plan

The Association's three year business plan for the period 2016-2019 is now behind us and is in the process of review and revision in anticipation of a resumption of some sort of post-Covid normality.

In conclusion

After over eight years' experience of running the library in Low Fell and developing an ongoing programme of events and activities, written and verbal feedback from users and residents continues to be extremely positive.

We are an enthusiastic group of volunteers, committed to improving the services and events offered by Low Fell Library. Our sincere thanks to all our partners and donors who have enabled us to achieve the outcomes described in this report, and who have put us in a healthy position in order to progress in the future. We appreciate and welcome all feedback and suggestions and look forward to the future continued success of Low Fell Library.

What our library users have said ...

Fantastic staff – lovely for the four children I had with me (2, 7, 9 and 10!) Thank you.

I love coming to this library to study – it has such a nice feel to it.

Lovely coffee and the service provided by the volunteers is always good.

Thank you for allowing me to do my work experience here. I have loved every second of being here.

Thanks for keeping me supplied with books during the pandemic, it saved my life.

Low Fell Library Association

Registered Charity No. 1153726

**Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2021**

Contents:

Legal and Administrative Information	Page 3
Examiners Report	Page 4
Receipts and Payments Account	Page 5
Statement of Assets and Liabilities	Page 6
Notes to the Accounts	Pages 7 - 8

Charity Name: Low Fell Library Association

Charity No: 1153726

Registered Office:
710a Durham Road
Low Fell
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6HT

Trustees:
Frank Hindle (Chair)
Gillian Beauchamp (Vice-Chair)
Susan Le Jeune (Secretary)
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Independent Examiner:
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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

Report to the Trustees	Low Fell Library Association (LFLA)
Charity No	1153726
On the accounts for period ended	31 March 2021
Set out on pages	5-8

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and Examiner:

The Trustees of the charity are responsible for the preparation of accounts. They consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and that an Independent Examination is needed. Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts (under section 145 of the 2001 Act.
- follow the procedure laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of the independent examiner's statement:

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the Trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view', and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiners statement:

In connection with my examination, no material matters have come to my attention which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- the accounts do not accord with such records; or
- the accounts do not comply with relevant accounting requirements under section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS102).

I have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Darren Thompson
FutureSkills North East CIC
44 Witton Drive
Spennymoor
Co. Durham DL16 6LU

Date: 23rd July 2021

Low Fell Library Association

Receipts and Payments Account 1 April 2020 - 31 March 2021

	Notes	Restricted £	Unrestricted £	2021 £	2020 £
Receipts					
Grants & Donations	4	-	27,155.00	27,155.00	503.00
Room & Equipment Hire		-	-	-	695.00
LFLA Fundraising		-	-	-	21.00
Library & Community Events		-	-	-	2,258.00
Library Takings		-	212.00	212.00	2,125.00
Other Income	5	-	256.00	256.00	
Bank Interest		-	11.00	11.00	10.00
Total Receipts		-	27,634.00	27,634.00	5,612.00
Payments					
Library & Community Events		-	-	-	1,358.00
Library Running Costs	6	-	10,742.00	10,742.00	8,505.00
Office Expenses	7	-	504.00	504.00	3,078.00
Volunteer Costs		-	54.00	54.00	210.00
Governance costs	8	-	869.00	869.00	867.00
Course costs		-	-	-	1,260.00
Donation		-	154.00	154.00	
Total payments		-	12,323.00	12,323.00	15,278.00
Surplus/Deficit for the period		-	15,311.00	15,311.00	(9,666.00)
Total funds brought forward 1st April 2020		2,096.00	31,026.00	33,122.00	42,788.00
Total funds carried forward 31st March 2021		2,096.00	46,337.00	48,433.00	33,122.00

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Low Fell Library Association

Notes to the accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021

1	<p>These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant note(s) to these accounts.</p> <p>The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – Charities SORP (FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.</p>
2	<p>Low Fell Library Association is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Charity No.1153726 registered on 9th September 2013. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees. The organisation has no paid staff, the library is operated by a team of volunteers.</p>
3	<p><i>Corporation Tax:</i></p> <p>The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.</p>
4	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £25,000.00 - Gateshead Council COVID-19 grant• £2,155.00 – Donations
5	<p>This includes refunded amounts from utility companies totalling £256.00.</p>
6	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• £57.00 – Newspapers (relating to payment of bill from 2019/20)• £1,038.00 - Electricity• £1,267.00 - Gas• £330.00 - Water• £8,050.00 – Recharge to Gateshead Council
7	<p>This includes items such as stationery, cleaning, storage, small items of equipment and miscellaneous costs. An item of expenditure totalling £10 relating to 2019/20 is also included.</p>

8	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £559.00 – Insurance • £275.00 – Accountancy fee • £35.00 – ICO registration
9	<p>This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash at bank - £48,107.00 • Cash in hand - £326.00
10	<p>This includes outstanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expenditure relating to the fitting out of the kitchen - £2,772.00 • Gateshead Council Recharge (Oct '20-Mar '21) - £1,663.00 • Uncleared cheque - £18.00
11	<p><i>Restricted Reserves:</i> Funds that have been given to the charity for a specific purpose and therefore can only be spent on designated activity as agreed with the funder.</p>
12	<p><i>Unrestricted reserves:</i> Money available to the charity. The charity has a reserves policy which sets out a commitment to maintaining reserves that are sufficient to meet the anticipated operating costs for a period required to give notice on any lease or service level agreements that the charity has entered into.</p>