

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

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.

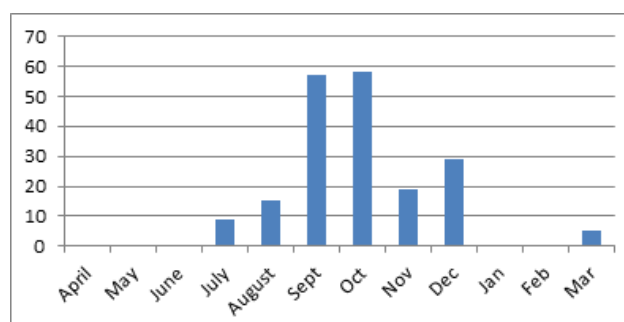
The following information provides a snapshot of the usage statistics for 2020 / 2021 (including comparisons with the previous year):

	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.



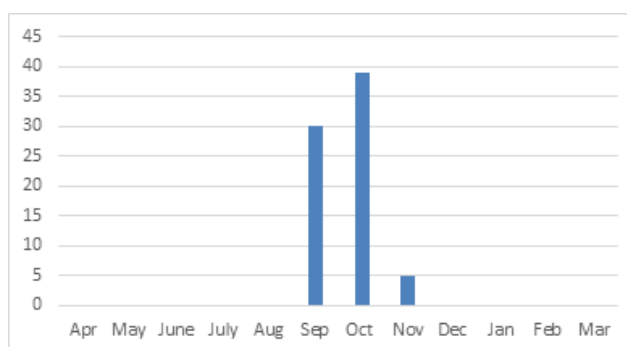
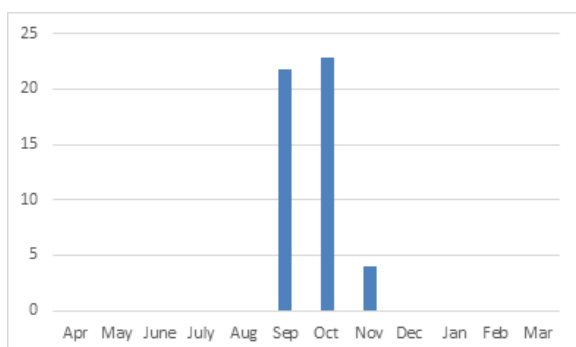
Not only were available hours for library visitors reduced, but the services able to be provided were also severely restricted, with no group activities, restricted (and sometimes no) computer use, and limited or no book browsing.

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.

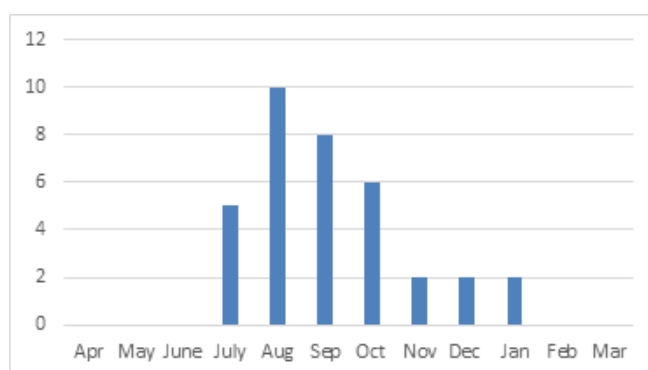


Rhymetime

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**

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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 Heselwood
Alyson Barratt

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 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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**Statement of Assets and Liabilities
as at 31 March 2021**

		2021	2020
	Notes	£	£
Current assets:			
Cash at bank and in hand	9	48,433.00	33,122.00
Total current assets:		48,433.00	33,122.00
Current liabilities:			
Cheques still to clear		18.00	67.00
Accrual for late invoices		4,435.00	6,270.00
Total current liabilities:	10	4,453.00	6,337.00
Net assets:		43,980.00	26,785.00
Represented by:			
Restricted reserves	11	2,096.00	2,096.00
Unrestricted reserves	12	41,884.00	24,689.00
Total funds:		43,980.00	26,785.00

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

Signed: *F Hindle* Position: CHAIR

Signed: *D. De Genn* Position: SECRETARY

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>