



A Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing: Harnessing the power of information for renewal and recovery

Action Plan Refresh 2021-2023

presented by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), the ALLIANCE, the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI), and the Scottish Government Self Management and Health Literacy team.

Contents

Executive Summary	5
Vision and context	7
Lead Partners	7
Our Purpose	7
Our Vision	8
Contribution to wider strategy	9
Our Approach	10
Building on strengths	10
Guiding principles	12
Communication	14
What will success look like?	16
What will we deliver and how?	18
Four types of support	18
A go-to place for trusted health and wellbeing information	18
Supporting digital, information and health literacy skills and access	19
Facilitated reading and storytelling for personal growth and therapeutic support	20
Social interaction and empathic help and support – face to face and digital	20
Objectives and outputs	22
Evaluating impact	25
References	28

“The vision and focus [of this plan] align with what we are looking to do in primary care- support people to live healthier lives in local communities..... Adapting libraries’ role and function adds another voice to the choir.”

Senior Medical Adviser, Primary Care Directorate, Scottish Government.

Foreword

People across Scotland need access to information and support that will empower them to self-manage, and to maintain and improve their health and wellbeing. Meeting this need is more important than ever now, to build resilient and healthy communities following the COVID pandemic.

In this context, we welcome this refresh of the **Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing** action plan, which illuminates the vital role of libraries as community partners in health and wellbeing. As universal services, libraries are local 'go-to' places for access to trusted health and wellbeing information, for building skills in digital, information and health literacy, and delivering the therapeutic benefits of reading. They also provide valued physical and digital spaces for connecting people and addressing the growing challenge of social isolation.

At a time when the health inequalities gap is growing, **Collective Force** outlines how libraries will play a leading role in digital inclusion, reaching out to new groups with the technology and digital skills they need to access health information and services. They will respond to local populations with greatest need through co-designing new service models with their communities and as equal partners with health and social care.

Fundamentally, **Collective Force** demonstrates the power of new, collaborative ways of working across sectors, maximising use of technology, information and community assets to improve pathways of care and support.

The refresh of [Scotland's Digital Health and Care Strategy](#) highlights this important role of libraries. We now commend this plan to you as a call to action to engage with libraries in local authorities, education and health, as key partners in health and social care transformation.

Margaret Whoriskey, Deputy Director of Digital Health and Care, Scottish Government







Nicola Dickie, Director - People Policy, COSLA;
Chair of Action Planning Group, **Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing**.




Executive Summary

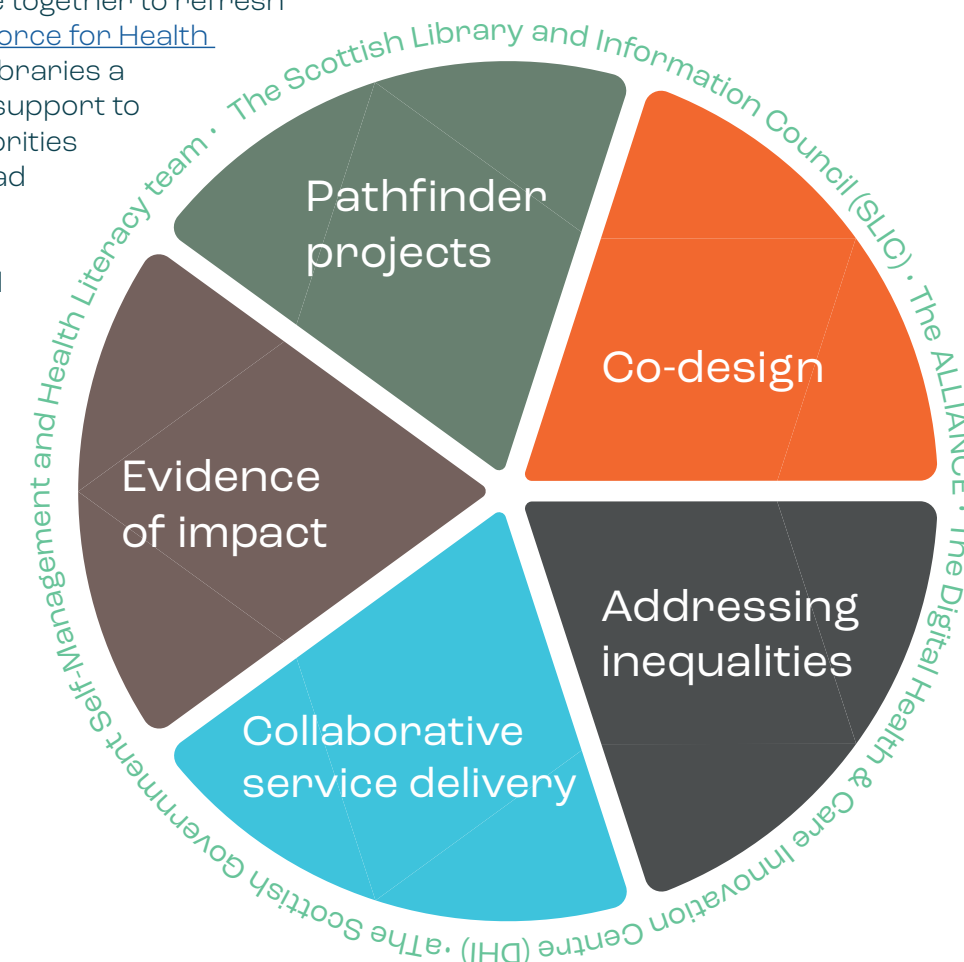
This plan lays foundations for a cross-sectoral national network that will establish libraries as the go-to place in their communities for:

-  **Trusted health and wellbeing information, in digital and other media.**
-  **Digital, information and health literacy skills and access**
-  **Facilitated reading and storytelling for personal growth and therapeutic support**
-  **Social interaction and empathic help and support – both face to face and digital**

This network will enable more resilient, healthier communities to emerge following the COVID pandemic. It will support the movement to a health and wellbeing service model co-designed with citizens, with a focus on self management and preventing ill-health.

Partners

National partners have come together to refresh the original [2019 Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing Plan](#)¹, to give libraries a strong vision, guidance and support to respond to the changing priorities resulting from COVID. The lead partners are: the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI), and the Scottish Government Self Management and Health Literacy team. Public Health Scotland, NHS 24, COSLA, and NHS Education for Scotland have also contributed to the plan and will help to support its implementation.



Key elements of the plan

- **Pathfinder projects** to share learning and evaluate impact. Individual library services will be supported to define activities, outcome areas and target population groups where there is greatest need and greatest likelihood of impact through library support. These pathfinders will implement new approaches, measure impact, and disseminate learning.
- **Co-design** - bringing library services together with health and social care partners, third sector staff, and citizens, to design and develop services that meet health and wellbeing needs.
- **Proactively addressing inequalities** by making knowledge accessible to all. This will expand libraries' existing role in digital inclusion, underpinned by knowledge exchange and learning opportunities. Education and training will include: supporting people at risk of exclusion; inclusive communication; accessible information; using tools to identify and mitigate inequalities.
- **Strengthening relationships** and practical arrangements for collaborative service delivery across libraries, health and social care and third sector partners. This will support new pathways of care centred on self management and communities.
- **Building up a body of evidence of impact** of library services on health and wellbeing through use of a common evaluation framework that supports measurement of outcomes over short, medium and long-term timescales.



Vision and context

This is a refresh of the 2019 [Collective Force for Health and Wellbeing](#) '1 action plan, which we have updated to respond to the changing needs resulting from the COVID pandemic. We set out how libraries in local authorities, schools, NHS and other sectors will work with partners in health and social care and the third sector to become inclusive, digitally enabled hubs for trusted health and wellbeing information in their communities. In this role they will act as community facilitators to empower people to emerge from COVID as partners and leaders in their own health and wellbeing.

Lead partners

The plan is led and delivered by the following partners: the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC), the ALLIANCE, Scottish Government Health Literacy and Self Management team, and the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre (DHI). Our collective plans for implementation are further supported by NHS Education for Scotland, Public Health Scotland, and NHS 24. The Chief Officer for the Health and Social Care team within COSLA has chaired the steering group responsible for developing this plan, and this COSLA team will continue to support its implementation.

Our purpose

The purpose of our plan is two-fold:

1. To unify the lead partners around a shared vision and key set of actions that they will undertake to support library services to realise their full potential as knowledge hubs for health and wellbeing in their communities.
2. To give libraries a common vision, guidance and support to help develop inclusive, digitally enabled services for health and wellbeing in their communities. The plan outlines how libraries can support the priorities arising from the COVID pandemic and reach people at risk of digital and other forms of exclusion who have been most severely impacted by COVID.

Our plan focuses initially on deliverables that are achievable within existing resource in the next two years, to address urgent needs created by the COVID pandemic. It will deliver impact in this time frame by building on the many existing examples of library-led collaboration and community activation. This initial programme will lay foundations for future larger scale development, wider impact and closer joined up working across libraries, health and social care and third sectors.



Our vision

Libraries in local authorities, schools, the NHS and beyond, will collaborate as a national network to support health and wellbeing. This network will empower, enable and connect people across Scotland to access and share knowledge to:

- live well on their own terms with any conditions they may have.
- take more control over their health and wellbeing and the external factors that influence this.
- work as partners with health and care professionals in making shared, informed decisions
- overcome barriers to improving their health and wellbeing – for example, due to age, disability, language, social or ethnic background.

This refreshed plan builds on the unifying purpose and collaboration which libraries and partners have built during the COVID pandemic to make this vision an reality for communities across Scotland.

Reach of public library services

- Public libraries provide a national infrastructure across Scotland with over 490 local venues, 49 mobile libraries and a 24/7 digital offer. ¹¹
- 1 in 22 of the public regularly use local libraries. ¹¹
- There are over 23 million visits annually to nearly 550 library service points and mobile libraries. ¹⁵
- There are 1.9 times more public library visits than there are to the top 10 free visitor attractions in Scotland each year. ¹⁵
- Annually there are 6.3 times more visits to public libraries than to the men’s Scottish Premiership games. ¹⁵
- Over 1.7 million computer hours are used annually across Scottish libraries. ¹⁵



Public Library Strategy

This plan makes a direct contribution to wider strategic objectives across library , health and social care sectors. It delivers on the strategic aims set out in [Forward: Scotland’s Public Library Strategy](#) ¹¹. TAs illustrated below, **Collective Force** supports the three-fold focus of the public library on people, place and partnership:



People

- Development of digital, health and information literacy skills.
- Supporting therapeutic use of reading for wellbeing and personal growth.
- Making knowledge equally accessible to all



Place

- Libraries as digital, physical and social spaces for accessing and sharing knowledge to improve health and wellbeing.
- Pathfinder projects responding to health priorities and the needs of groups at risk of exclusion in the local community.



Partnership

- Building collaboration between libraries, health and social care services and third sector to support new pathways of care with a focus on self management and community support.

Collective Force further supports the aims of digital inclusion and citizen empowerment within [Scotland’s Digital Health and Care Strategy](#); ² [Realistic Medicine](#) ³ , the [Health Literacy Action Plan](#) ²³ , and [A Connected Scotland – our strategy for tackling social isolation](#). ⁴ More broadly, it supports the policy move to a model of health and social care that is embedded in communities, focused on self management and prevention of ill-health, and led by citizens working in partnership with health and care professionals. Illustrates how the work outlined in this plan supports policy and strategy goals across health, social services, digital development, culture and education, and contributes overall to Scotland’s wellbeing economy.



Our Approach

Building on strengths

We will build on the unique strengths of libraries as:



- A far-reaching national network of services, extending across urban, rural and remote areas.



- Services embedded in their communities, widely used and appreciated by local people. They are ideally positioned to respond to local needs and to serve as a focal point for mobilising communities to take ownership of their health and wellbeing.



- Physical, digital and social spaces which enable people to learn, support their personal growth, meet and engage with others, share and create.



- Societal equalisers, where people from all parts of society and all economic backgrounds have equal rights and are equally welcome, with the same free access to knowledge and learning.



- Essential services for people at risk of digital exclusion, who increasingly need Internet connectivity and digital skills training in order to access education, public services, benefits and welfare support.



- Existing providers of health and wellbeing support in many localities⁵. This action plan is the opportunity to begin to scale up and spread this central health and wellbeing role across Scotland.



Libraries as societal equalisers



Libraries are inclusive, providing books, offering computers and online access to those without either, providing literacy programmes for all ages, and digital and physical resources, all without cost to the user.....No matter a person's financial or social standing, libraries provide the same opportunities to all who come through their doors or access their resources online..... Libraries continue to be the great equalizer, bringing people from disparate backgrounds together to learn, experience and connect.”¹⁶

In particular, this plan aims to capitalise on the resilience, creativity and impact many libraries demonstrated during the COVID pandemic. A [report by the Carnegie Trust](#)²² identified that around three in ten people engaged with public library services during lockdown. People who used the service during this period derived a range of benefits, from being provided with useful information to experiencing a positive impact on their wellbeing; from feeling more connected to their community or feeling less alone, to being supported to develop an interest or hobby. Examples of local library responses in Scotland include:

- Launching a new ‘Libraries Direct’ service providing home delivery of books and toys, friendship calls and digital support by phone to isolated and vulnerable individuals and families.
- Expanding e-Services, doubling e-Book/e-Audio content, personally contacting all housebound and elderly users, supplying tablets for people with no devices, setting up a support line for using IT, and home book deliveries.



Guiding principles

In this action plan, we set out the support which we as national bodies will provide to enable implementation at local level. Our approach is guided by:



- A focus on realising the full potential of libraries in enabling co-designed, community-based improvement in health and wellbeing. Within this focus we will support libraries to play an active role in prevention of ill-health, early intervention and self management when health issues occur. We will also support wellbeing in a wider sense through social connectedness and personal development.



- Using pathfinders to share learning and evaluate impact. We will support individual library services to become pathfinders for different elements of this action plan. Library services will be invited to choose particular activities, outcome areas (e.g., prevention of ill health), and target population groups as a basis for testing new approaches and evaluating impact. We will also provide knowledge exchange forums for library staff, partners and users of services to share their learning from these pathfinders. This will help to build the evidence base for the value libraries bring to health and wellbeing, and will highlight key enablers of successfully implementing this enhanced role.



- A commitment to co-design. We will bring library services together with health and social care partners, third sector staff, and citizens, to design and develop services that meet health and wellbeing needs. As a key enabler of co-design, we will establish an Implementation Governance Group which brings together representation from all stakeholder groups to drive high-impact delivery of this action plan. This will provide an influential forum involving policymakers, partners in health and social care delivery, third sector, citizens and representatives of groups at risk of exclusion.

Groups at risk of exclusion

- People with sensory impairment.
- Care leavers
- Shielding groups
- Families on low incomes
- People with addictions
- Older people
- People with physical disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- Unpaid carers
- People with long term physical and mental health conditions
- People from ethnic minority communities
- People experiencing homelessness
- Traveller groups
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- People whose first language is not English



- Recognition that wellbeing is a combination of social, cultural, economic and health components, all interdependent and inter-linked. This means that, for example, libraries may choose to demonstrate their impact on health and wellbeing through their work in the creative arts or in social activities.



- **A commitment to inclusion:**
 - Engaging pathfinder projects in defining and delivering targeted support for groups in their community where libraries can address local inequalities in health and wellbeing with maximum impact. For example, this may involve libraries at local level identifying where they can offer the greatest support to one or more of the groups at risk of inequality listed in box 1 below.
 - Strengthening and raising the profile of libraries' role in digital inclusion as an enabler of access to health and wellbeing information and support.



- Bringing together the complementary strengths of libraries across all sectors as digital providers, as well as physical spaces where people feel safe and supported, and a focal point for human connection through library staff and opportunities for social interaction.

Building on strong foundations

The [Co-creating Libraries for Wellbeing project](#) ²⁷ funded by SLIC, led by the ALLIANCE and Public Health Scotland, used co-design methodology to develop transformative approaches to health and wellbeing in three health and social care partnerships. It engaged libraries, citizens third sector services and health and social care in supporting prevention, early intervention and self management for young people with mental health needs.



An earlier SLIC grant award in 2017 enabled the ALLIANCE to deliver training in using health information from self management to over 100 staff from around 75% of public library services. The training is supported by an online toolkit ([Going in the Right Direction](#).)

The Scottish Government Health Literacy and Self Management team and SLIC have jointly funded development of a blended learning course - [Information for Wellbeing](#) - to support library and third sector staff to develop their skills in helping citizens with health literacy and therapeutic use of reading for wellbeing. This course has a strong focus on supporting people at risk of exclusion, and on using remote technology as well as face to face delivery to reach people at risk of social isolation.

SLIC's [Health on the Shelf](#) ⁵ report provides an A-Z of health and wellbeing services provided by libraries. These range from autism-friendly spaces to bibliotherapy and books on prescription and collections for carers and dementia to Macmillan services located in libraries and reminiscence groups.

Communication

We recognise that a targeted communication strategy with strong, consistent messages about the central role of modern library services in health and wellbeing is crucial to maximising the impact of this action plan. A cornerstone of our communication will be recalibrating how people see library services and their contribution to health and care, redressing traditional library stereotypes. By realising the vision set out in this plan, library services will establish a new identity as core partners in transformation of health and social care. They will be leaders in supporting communities to manage their health and in shaping a digitally enabled health and wellbeing future.

As illustrated by the quotes below, the consultation on this action plan refresh showed the strong support among national and local partners for developing the role of libraries in health and wellbeing, and a willingness to engage and collaborate.

“ The vision and context of this plan mirrors clearly the priorities within the HSCP COVID-19 Recovery & Renewal Plan and the HSCP Strategic Plan (2019 – 2022), specifically within the areas of person centred patient empowerment and digital transformation.....We strongly believe that the proposed model of digitally enabled hubs if appropriately developed and resourced would support individual improvement in their health literacy abilities, increasing their skills of self-care and self management. As one of the local key community planning partners, it is anticipated that the HSCP would actively collaborate in the local establishment of this programme.”

Response from Health and Social Care Partnership.



“ The implementation of this action plan could have a really positive impact on access to information on public health approaches for citizens.”

Chief Nursing Officer's Directorate, Scottish Government.

“ The vision and focus aligns with what we are looking to do in primary care- support people to live healthier lives in local communities..... Adapting [libraries'] role and function adds another voice to the choir.”

Primary Care Directorate, Scottish Government.

“ There are a number of key areas of mutual interest which the draft Plan highlights, and we therefore support the Plan's overarching vision and activities....We would welcome the opportunity to engage in future Pathfinder projects; below we have provided further information to support possible future areas of collaboration.”

Response from national health charity.

We will work with communication teams in local authorities, NHS, third sector and Scottish Government to capitalise on this support, designing tailored communication to:

- Engage health and social care services in working as partners with libraries to transform local health and social care systems towards citizen- and community-led approaches, with a greater focus on early intervention and supporting self management.
- Build awareness and support for the health and wellbeing role of libraries among national policy leads across health, culture and social services.
- Create leadership, and identify champions for libraries' health and wellbeing role in the Community Planning structures within local authorities.
- Build leadership and peer support among library services for strengthening their core role in health and wellbeing, as a national network extending across organisations and sectors.

What will success look like?

The scenarios below illustrate how strengthening the role of libraries as partners in health and wellbeing services will make a real difference to people who most need support.

Scenario 1: Public library support

Mary Robinson is a 67-year-old woman living in a remote part of East Ayrshire. She has COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, which causes severe breathlessness), and diabetes type 2. She had an extended period of shielding beginning in March 2020 and still rarely leaves the house. She uses an iPad for weekly calls with her daughter who lives in Edinburgh and is worried about her mum. Mary has been feeling lonely and depressed for some time and wants to make a move to improve her general wellbeing now that lockdown has eased. Her community respiratory nurse has already provided her with COPD information and suggests using the local library service to get more support for general health and wellbeing.

Sarah, a library assistant, has completed the Information for Wellbeing course, which provides training on supporting people's health literacy needs through remote technology. She talks through Mary's needs and to discuss how confident she is in using digital tools. They agree a time for a Zoom call to give Mary a tour of relevant information resources online. They discuss:

- What is most useful to Mary in the healthy living and self management information from [NHS inform](#) and relevant charity websites.
- The wellbeing assessment and phonline services offered by mental health charities.
- Since Mary has said she really misses social contact with friends and acquaintances, Sarah introduces her to online support and penfriend groups.
- As they chat, Mary explains that she has lived all her life in East Ayrshire, and shares some of the changes she has lived through over the years. Sarah suggests that she might like to share her experiences and meet new people by trying the regular storytelling group that runs every couple of weeks over Zoom.

Sarah uses the health literacy Teach back technique to check that Mary feels confident in following up on the sites and contacts suggested. She also summarises the key points in an email and offers a follow-up call the following week.

At the end of their session, Mary is buoyed up by the warmth of the human connection with Sarah. She is excited about the new opportunities to find information, meet new people, and try out new skills online. She calls her daughter that evening to tell her all about it.



Scenario 2: School library support

David runs a lunchtime story café in his secondary school, in collaboration with a wellbeing coach from a local mental health third sector organisation. The story café has rules and boundaries agreed by the librarian and the participants.



During lockdown they run a café remotely over MS Teams, based on Debi Glioni's book *Night Shift*.⁶ This is a beautifully illustrated picture book about a young woman gaining ground against the dragons of depression that pursue her. After the café, Saanvi, an S5 student, emails David to say how much this book has meant to her. She discloses that she has been suffering from depression during lockdown, and that her family is finding it difficult to understand and help. The book and the discussion had helped Saanvi to get a new perspective on her experience and to reach out for support.

Following school policy, as this is a welfare concern, David puts Saanvi in touch with the Guidance team. With agreement from the

Guidance team, the mental health wellbeing coach offers 1-1 support to Saanvi. David provides her with further information written for young people about depression, and identifies fiction and poetry centred on depression, chosen to be suitable for Saanvi's reading ability and tastes. He also signposts her to other sources of support within the school and the wider community.

Scenario 3: Supporting someone with learning disabilities

Muriel is a 25-year-old woman with multiple learning disabilities. Her mother accompanies her to the library service to find information about losing weight in a healthy way. She explains to Andrei, the library assistant, that Muriel has been diagnosed with depression and that this has increased comfort eating. The GP has provided various leaflets, but Muriel has not been able to read them herself, and is resisting taking the anti-depressant medication prescribed.

Andrei has completed the [Information for Wellbeing](#) course, which highlights ways to overcome barriers to health literacy. He identifies and prints off resources about healthy eating and lifestyle, designed for people with learning disabilities, from the [EasyHealth](#) website. He also directs them to resources about depression and anti-depressant medicines on this site.

Aware that his role is not only to provide information but to empower people to access it for themselves, Andrei confirms that Muriel's parents have access to IT at home – a desktop PC and tablet. Muriel has always wanted to try these, and her family are willing in principle. However, Muriel would need special support to use the technology, beyond what her parents can give, and the family want to be assured that it is set up safely. Andrei gives them details of the charity [AbilityNet](#), highlighting the resources they offer to support people with learning disabilities to use technology. They will arrange one to one appointments to help people get started with IT.

He gives them a demonstration of other opportunities such as [PAMIS](#) virtual activities and digital passports to try once they get online. These will help both Muriel and her parents with information and new sources of social support.

Muriel is delighted to have things she can read herself, and new opportunities to look forward to. She and her mother leave feeling much happier and better supported.



What will we deliver, and how?

Four types of support

Within the next two years, as partners leading this plan, we will support libraries to lay foundations for a national network of physical and digital knowledge hubs. This network will enable people from all backgrounds and walks of life in local communities to access four types of support for health and wellbeing on equal terms:

A go-to place for trusted health and wellbeing information

We will support libraries to establish a central role as digital and physical hubs in the community for accessing the full range of trusted health and wellbeing information services.

Information sources

This includes, for example, providing access to [NHS inform](#), [ALISS](#), social care services information, charity information sources, and the patient/public summaries of [SIGN guidelines](#) and [Cochrane reviews](#). This role includes an equal focus on information about maximising wellbeing, and preventing ill-health, as well as information for health conditions and health or social care needs.

Digital apps and tools

In response to the shift during COVID to digital delivery of health and care services, we will help libraries to grow their role in enabling people to use quality assured apps and other interactive digital tools for health and wellbeing. To ensure that this support reaches everyone who needs it, library services will also grow their skills in supporting use of assistive technologies and digital accessibility services. The ALLIANCE's [Discover Digital](#) initiative presents key opportunities for libraries to become partners in these new forms of digital enablement.

Quality assurance

To support the focus on quality assured information, DHI, SLIC and the ALLIANCE are providing an evaluation checklist for health information resources and tools as part of the [Information for Wellbeing](#) health literacy blended learning course for library and third sector staff.



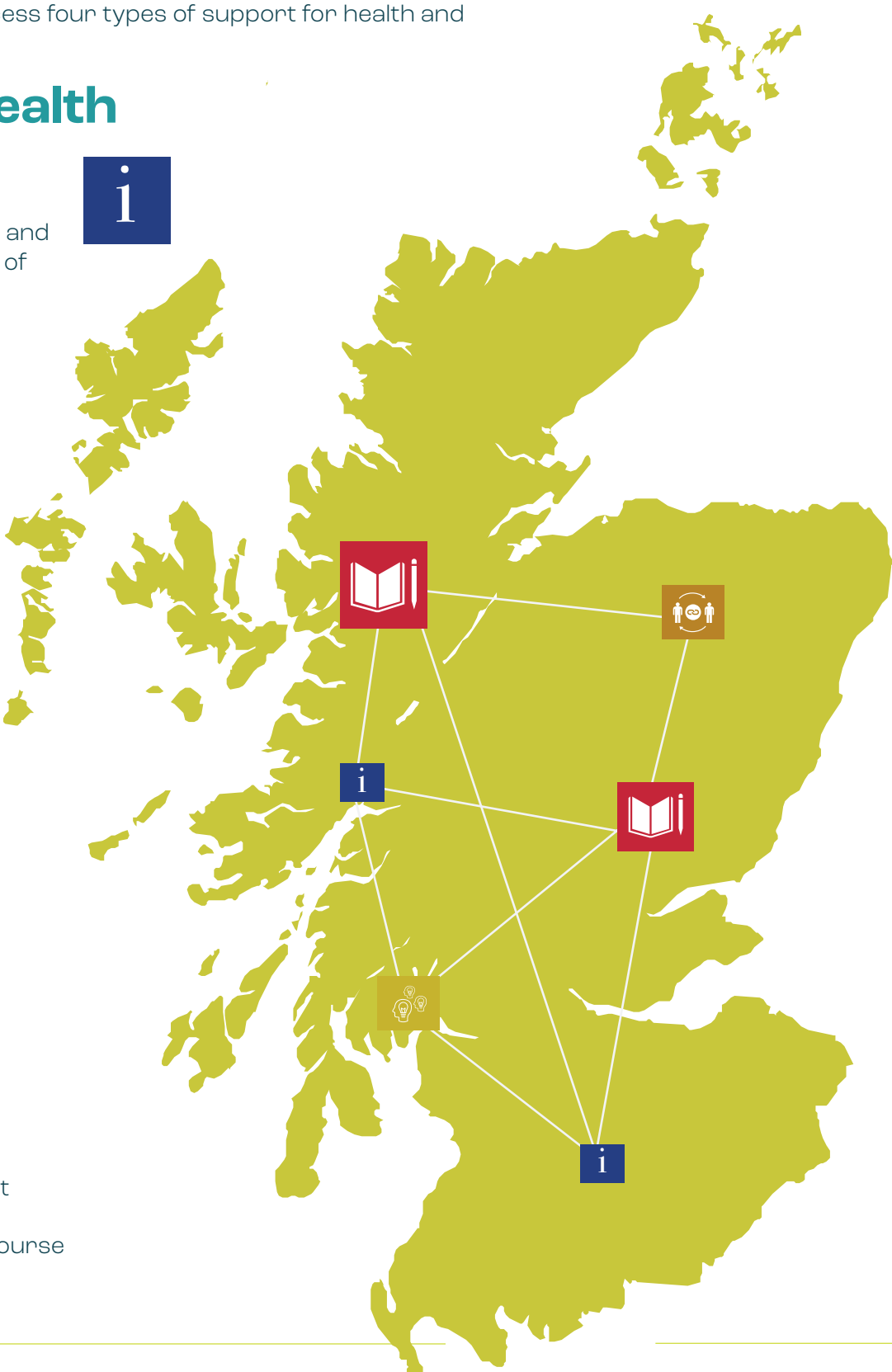
Supporting digital, information and health literacy skills and access.

Through this plan, we will support library services to expand their role in creating a digitally inclusive society in which no-one is disadvantaged or their opportunities for health and wellbeing diminished because they cannot access essential information or services through digital means.

Libraries already have an essential role in digital inclusion (see box 2). This action plan will support libraries to expand their work in building digital, information and literacy skills that will:

- Empower people to self manage and to be more active partners and in decisions about their health and care.
- Enable communities to take more control in shaping their digital health future.

Libraries will strengthen their collaboration with digital enablement partners such as [Connecting Scotland](#) and [AbilityNet](#) to support people who have barriers to accessing technology. This will include enriching libraries' support in using assistive technologies and other digitally accessibility tools.



Libraries provide free access to computers and Internet and training in digital skills in a context where currently in Scotland:

- 11% of the Scottish population are non-users of the Internet ¹⁷.
- 15% are estimated to face digital inequality in Scotland ¹⁸.
- It is thought that 19% (c.1 million) of Scottish people do not know how to use digital technology ¹⁸.
- Over a third of Scottish households in lower income brackets do not have any internet access at all. ¹⁸.

“I don’t have broadband partly because I can’t afford it but partly because I always get stuck tryin to do things online. I am getting better but having your helpful staff on hand is so reassuring.” (Library user, ¹⁵)

“Finding jobs, obtaining benefits and government services are users’ most frequently desired outcomes from library PC use. CVs are the most commonly printed items.” ¹⁹

Box 2



Facilitated reading and storytelling for personal growth and therapeutic support.

Since the second millennium libraries have been described as “healing places for the soul.” ⁷ SIGN ⁸ and NICE ⁹ guidelines recognise the strong evidence base for the therapeutic role of facilitated reading and storytelling.

It is an effective and cost-effective way to address mild to moderate depression and anxiety, addictions, stress and loneliness, and to build people’s capability in self management of long-term health conditions including pain, cancer and diabetes. The need for this support is greater than ever at this time, to respond to the impacts of COVID on psychological, social and economic wellbeing across our communities.

This action plan commits to training and developing library staff and helping them to work together, so that this words for wellbeing (or ‘bibliotherapy’) support becomes a core part of the library service offering across Scotland.

This includes expanding digital delivery of words for wellbeing support through remote communication technologies as well as through the traditional face to face routes. This digital facilitation is key to ensuring that people in remote areas or who experience barriers to accessing the physical library space can get the full benefit of this therapeutic help and support for personal growth.



Social interaction and empathic help and support – face to face and digital

Library staff and people who use libraries have always been clear that the library service is about people as much as it is about information. As recognised in the [Connected Scotland](#) ⁴ strategy, libraries play a key role in addressing social isolation by providing friendly, supportive interaction with library staff and other library users.

This refreshed action plan recognises that the pandemic has accelerated the use of remote technology to enable people to interact one to one and in facilitated groups. It seeks to optimise use of this technology with empathy and good communication skills, to support people at risk of exclusion from face-to-face communication and those who are unable to access to physical libraries.



“ My real education, the superstructure, the details, the true architecture, I got out of the public library. For an impoverished child whose family could not afford to buy books, the library was the open door to wonder and achievement, and I can never be sufficiently grateful that I had the wit to charge through that door and make the most of it. “

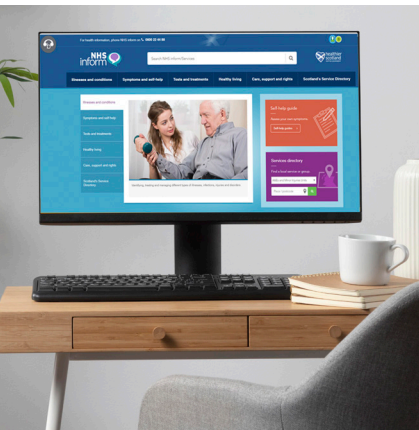
Isaac Asimov



Objectives and outputs

The objectives below outline how we will work together in this action plan over the next two years, building on existing achievements to lay foundations for libraries as key partners in future health and wellbeing services which deliver practical improvements to people's health and wellbeing.

Objective 1: Establish public libraries as physical and digital hubs for trusted health and wellbeing information and digital tools.



Outputs

Training, online catalogue and quality assurance checklist, to help public and school libraries to:

- Provide quality assured information specific to the impacts of COVID – e.g., Long COVID, mental and emotional health of health and social care staff and citizens, information on tests, treatment and vaccination.

- Signpost and support people to access quality assured information, apps and other digital tools and services for their physical and mental health needs.
- Expand their role in providing information to promote and maintain wellbeing and prevent ill-health

Responsibility: NES/ALLIANCE/NHS library network / DHI

Objective 2: Strengthen the skills and confidence of library staff in supporting health literacy, underpinned by digital and information literacy.



Outputs

Training and support package to build staff skills and create a cohort of experienced facilitators across NHS, public, school libraries and third sector who will support library staff to:

- Provide health literacy support for citizens, with a focus on navigating digital health and wellbeing information sources.
- Reach more people remotely through technology to support their health literacy needs. For example, this includes reaching people at risk of social isolation living in remote areas, people who are housebound due to physical or mental long-term conditions or disability, and people affected by poverty who cannot travel for financial reasons.

- Address digital exclusion by providing tailored digital health literacy support for the groups who need it most, and promoting use of assistive technologies and other accessible digital services.
- Create collaborative networks of support through partnership between libraries and other groups providing digital literacy support - e.g. [Connecting Scotland](#), [Barclay's Digital Eagles](#), [the Scottish Tech Army](#)

Responsibility: DHI/NES/ALLIANCE/SLIC

Objective 3: Build a cross-sectoral network of Words for Wellbeing ('bibliotherapy') services which facilitate reading and storytelling for personal growth and therapeutic support.



Outputs

Learning programme to create a cohort of skilled facilitators across NHS, public, school libraries and third sector who will:

- Facilitate reading and storytelling for wellbeing, face to face and virtually.
- Collaborate with providers of creative words for wellbeing services in third and independent sectors to extend support to whoever needs it, wherever they are.

- Communication campaign to promote this role of library services, and the evidence base for impact, to health and social care services and mental health leads locally and nationally.

Responsibility: SLIC/DHI/Scottish Poetry Library

Objective 4: Formalise collaborative relationships and operational processes between libraries and health and social care partners.



The supportive responses to consultation on this plan provide a wide range of partners to take collaboration across libraries and health and social care partners to new levels. Potential partners include: Health and social care partnerships; national charities such as Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland and Disability Equality Scotland; Education Scotland.

A key strategic step in formalising this collaborative service infrastructure will be creation of a cross-sectoral Implementation Governance Group with national and local representation at policy and service delivery levels. This will provide a coordinating focus and source of influence to generate wider support and drive implementation forward.

Outputs

- Implementation Governance Group with representation across national and local partners.
- Library participation in

public health networks and identification of collaborative projects with local public health leadership.

- Pathfinder projects to explore and evaluate the support public libraries can offer to:
- Health and social care service remobilisation and redesign of care pathways to strengthen self management and use of community assets.
- Community pharmacies, care at home and care home services as health and wellbeing information sources for staff and service users.
- Enable flexible use of libraries' physical assets – mobile services and buildings – as new spaces which can support health and wellbeing needs.
- Define communication and referral routes between public and school libraries, GP practices, and social prescribing roles – e.g. community connectors, community navigators, link workers.

Responsibility: SLIC / DHI/ Public Health Scotland/ NHS 24

Objective 5: Proactively address inequalities by making knowledge accessible to all.



Outputs

- Pathfinder services reporting impact and sharing learning based on co-designing services for specific groups at risk of exclusion, selected based on level of risk, local needs and opportunity for library impact.
- Ongoing programme of knowledge exchange and learning opportunities around supporting inequalities groups; inclusive communication and accessible information. This will include guidance and training on using existing public sector and government tools to identify and help mitigate inequalities – e.g. [Health Inequalities Impact Assessment](#) ;
- Equality impact assessment reports and action plans by local services engaged in pathfinder projects.
- Training and guidance around engagement models and co-design of service improvement with community groups. This will include use of tools such as the [VOICE](#) Plan-Do-Review methodology which is part of the community engagement standards.
- Collaboration with [Connecting Scotland](#), [AbilityNet](#) and others to promote role of libraries in digital access and digital skills development, to widen digital inclusion.

Responsibility: DHI/SLIC/ALLIANCE

Objective 6: Deliver pathfinder projects that demonstrate measurable impact of library services on health and wellbeing



Outputs

- Library service development plans incorporating objectives based on the *Collective Force* action plan and evaluation framework.
- Suite of pathfinder projects focused on delivery of different components of this action plan and on different target groups. These will include new projects and collaboration with existing initiatives – for example, of the Health Literacy Action Plan
- refresh; the [ALLIANCE Discover Digital developments](#); local local community initiatives.
- Impact measurement plans and reports based on the evaluation framework in this plan, demonstrating how library support contributes to health and wellbeing.

Responsibility: DHI/SLIC/ALLIANCE/SG Health Literacy team/ NHS Library network

Objective 7: Design and implement targetted communication strategy.



This communication strategy will raise the profile of libraries' role in health and wellbeing and build engagement among the following stakeholder groups:

- National policymakers in health, culture and social services
- Local health and social care services
- Community planning structures within local authorities
- Library staff across all sectors.

- The general public, with a specific focus on groups at risk of exclusion.

Outputs

Targeted ongoing communication and engagement plan.
Programme of engagement activities.
Suite of core messages and communication materials to promote libraries' role in health and wellbeing to different target audiences.

Responsibility: SLIC/DHI/ALLIANCE/PHS/cross-sectoral library network.

Evaluating impact

As outlined in Box 3 below, there is already good evidence for the positive impact of libraries on health and wellbeing. Through this action plan, we will complement this existing knowledge base with direct evidence of impact in the Scottish context. We will support libraries, including those leading pathfinder projects, to use define health and wellbeing objectives within their service development plans, and to use the generic evaluation framework below, based on guidance from [Evaluation Support Scotland](#).¹⁰ This will provide data to demonstrate how the activities outlined in this plan contribute to better health and social care outcomes and to the wider wellbeing outcomes in the National Performance Framework. Evaluation reports from individual services will be collated into a collective, current picture of library impact.

We will guide and support libraries to gather a range of types of evidence to build up this portfolio of impact - including:

- Case studies, including citizens telling their own stories, to illustrate collaborative working across sectors, and the impact of libraries on mental health and self management by people with long term conditions.
- Data on new uptake of digital services and support by target groups at risk of exclusion from health and wellbeing.
- Data on membership and library contacts (visits, phone, digital communication) by groups at risk of exclusion.
- Numbers of staff receiving training in health literacy skills, and examples of how they apply these skills in practice.
- Reports on library inclusion in joint strategic community planning for health and wellbeing, and details of the roles they are playing in:
 - Designing and delivering redesigned health and care pathways with a focus on self management, community empowerment and enablement.
 - Public health, health improvement and disease prevention initiatives, and how they are working as partners with health and other sectors.
 - Remobilisation and recovery of health and care services impacted by COVID.

Box 3: Impact of library services on health and wellbeing

Library usage is associated with higher life satisfaction, higher happiness and a higher sense of purpose in life.²⁰ “Children and young people who are the most engaged with literacy are three times more likely to have higher levels of mental wellbeing than children who are the least engaged.”²¹ . People who read for just 30 minutes a week are 18% more likely to report relatively high self-esteem and greater life satisfaction, and non-readers being 28% more likely to report feelings of depression.²¹

Systematic reviews and evidence-based national guidelines from SIGN⁸ and NICE⁹ confirm the positive impact of bibliotherapy (facilitated reading for wellbeing) on:

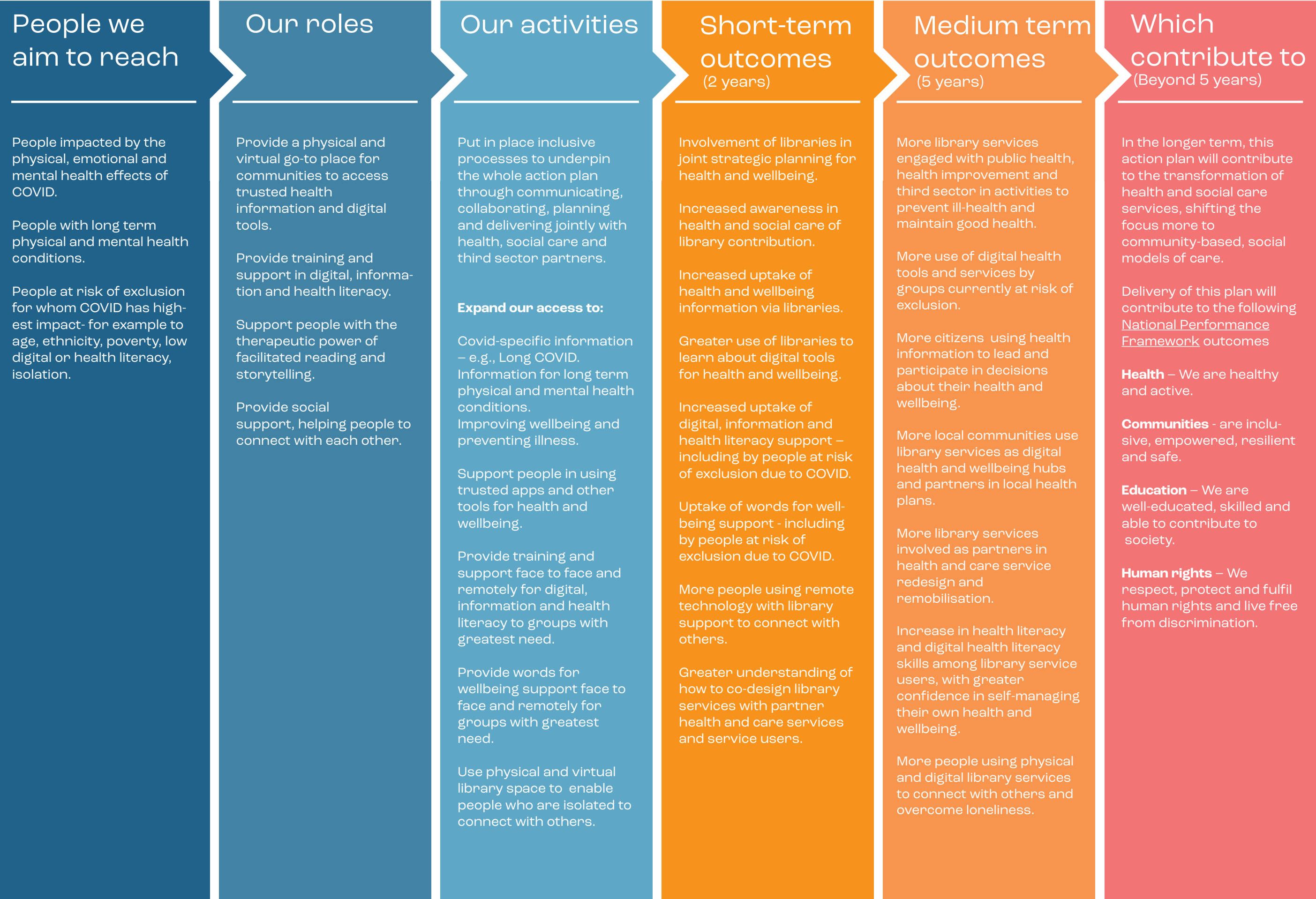
- | | |
|---|---|
| • Mild to moderate depression or anxiety. | • Alcohol and drug dependency |
| • Grief and bereavement | • Eating disorders |
| • Stress | • Self-managing with long term health conditions including chronic pain, cancer, chronic fatigue, diabetes. |
| • Self-harm | |
| • Social isolation | |

An in-depth health economic analysis for the Arts Council England identified savings to the NHS resulting from the positive health and wellbeing impact of library services.²⁰ Extrapolating these findings to the Scottish context indicates annual savings of £3.2 million annually to NHS Scotland.⁵

Box 2



Evaluation Framework



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“ A library in the middle of a community is a cross between an emergency exit, a life-raft and a festival. They are cathedrals of the mind; hospitals of the soul; theme parks of the imagination. On a cold rainy island, they are the only sheltered public spaces where you are not a consumer, but a citizen instead.

Caitlin Moran, journalist.