

## Members' Library Service Request Form

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# CUSTOMER SERVICES AND LIBRARIES ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024/25



East Lothian  
Council



**PREPARED BY:**  
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# INTRODUCTION

Libraries and Customer Services continue to be at the heart of East Lothian's communities—welcoming spaces where people of all ages come to learn, connect, and feel supported. Whether it's a parent attending Bookbug with their toddler, a young person finding a safe space after school, or an older resident joining a knit and natter or memories group, our libraries offer more than books—they offer belonging.

In 2024/25, our teams delivered 3,400 events and activities for children and young people and more than 1,600 for adults, ranging from author visits and creative workshops to digital support and wellbeing groups. Despite reduced opening hours over the winter period, visitor numbers rose by 9% compared to the previous year, and book issues were down by just 1.6%—a testament to the continued value our communities place on their libraries.

School libraries also saw increased engagement, with loan box deliveries to primary schools rising, and issues in secondary school libraries remaining stable despite absence within the team. Across our libraries and area offices, staff responded to local needs by co-creating new clubs, offering warm spaces, and supporting enquiries and applications for travel passes, benefits, housing and more.

Although the national Public Library Survey didn't take place this year, we've gathered stories and statistics from across East Lothian to show the difference our services make every day. From Dunbar to Ormiston, Musselburgh to North Berwick, our teams have worked closely with partners, volunteers, and local groups to ensure our services remain inclusive, responsive, and rooted in community.

In line with East Lothian Council's priorities—reducing poverty and inequality, growing our people and communities, and supporting recovery and renewal—we've focused on attainment, inclusion, and wellbeing. Our staff have shown incredible flexibility and commitment, ensuring that services remained consistent and welcoming, even during challenging times.

This report shares the numbers, stories, and partnerships that reflect our impact in 2024/25. It's a celebration of the people who make our libraries and customer services so special—and a reminder of the vital role they play in helping East Lothian thrive and I'd like to thank the team for all their hard work and commitment over 2024/25.

**CAROLINE MESSER**

TEAM MANAGER, LIBRARIES &  
CUSTOMER SERVICES



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# 2024/25 IN NUMBERS

## Customer Services and Libraries 2024/25



**77921**  
ELC  
Enquiries



**450454**  
Visits to  
Public  
Libraries



**7434**  
Travel  
Passes  
Processed



**611**  
Blue Badge  
Applications  
Supported



**20**  
Pop-Up  
Library  
Outreach  
Sessions



**189,195**  
Public  
Library  
Issues



**26,279**  
School  
Library  
Issues



**41,161**  
Digital  
Issues



**10592**  
New items  
added to  
stock



**88**  
Home  
Library  
Borrowers



**773**  
School  
Loan Box  
Requests



**704**  
Local  
History  
Enquiries



**26**  
Compliments  
received



**Bookbug**  
**778**  
Bookbug  
Sessions



**2624**  
Events for  
Children



**1651**  
Events for  
Adults



# 2024/25 IN NUMBERS

## EVENTS FOR ADULTS

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| CULTURE & CREATIVITY   | 468 |
| COMMUNITY & SOCIAL     | 691 |
| DIGITAL                | 134 |
| HEALTH & WELLBEING     | 166 |
| LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL | 86  |
| OTHER                  | 91  |

## EVENTS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| ARTS & CRAFTS                       | 373 |
| BOOKS & READING (INCLUDING BOOKBUG) | 901 |
| DIGITAL                             | 58  |
| ENVIRONMENTAL                       | 11  |
| HEALTH & WELLBEING                  | 4   |
| LEARNING & EDUCATIONAL              | 630 |
| CLASS VISITS                        | 587 |
| OTHER                               | 60  |

## Face to Face Customer Services Enquiries 2024/25

| Locations                                                      | Total Enquiries |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brunton Hall, Musselburgh<br>Customer Services Only            | 39,342          | 15% of enquiries in Musselburgh in 24/25 related to Housing. Criminal Justice Social Work being located in the building is reflected in 14% of all enquiries. A further 9% are specifically Homeless enquiries followed by Council Tax at 8%. 4% of enquiries related specifically to the Scottish Welfare Fund with a number of clients requiring help to complete applications. |
| John Muir House, Haddington<br>Customer Services Only          | 37,840          | 18% of all enquiries in Haddington in 24/25 related to the provision of a reception for the building. 8% of enquiries were Council Tax and 7% were Registration enquiries. With the move of the Housing Options to John Muir House reception enquiries have increased significantly and Homeless enquiries have doubled in the first quarter of 25/26.                            |
| Dunbar Customer Services & Library,<br>Bleachingfield          | 7224            | 16% of enquiries to the Dunbar office in 24/25 related to Transportation. Waste Services at 10% and Housing at 7.5% were the other significant areas customers were supported with by the team.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| North Berwick Customer Services &<br>Library                   | 5217            | 20.5% of enquiries in North Berwick in 24/25 related to Transportation. Housing queries and Roads each account for 5% of total enquiries. 45% of all enquiries in North Berwick were logged as general which will include a significant proportion of tourist enquiries as the library is a Visit Scotland information point.                                                     |
| Prestonpans Customer Services &<br>Library                     | 7078            | 14.5% of enquiries to the Prestonpans office in 24/25 related to Transportation. The most frequent of the remaining enquiries were Housing at 13% and Council Tax at 8%. blue badge enquiries were a further 6% of the total.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Tranent Customer Services & Library<br>George Johnstone Centre | 7095            | 19% of enquiries to the Tranent office in 24/25 related to Housing. The most frequent of the remaining enquiries were Council Tax at 8% and Transportation at 6% each. With interview rooms and meeting spaces well used in George Johnstone Centre, dealing with these was a further 6% of all enquiries..                                                                       |

# ENABLING, LEADING & CARING

Libraries and Customer Services are more than places to borrow books—they are welcoming spaces where people come for support, connection, and inspiration. In 2024/25, our work reflected East Lothian Council's core values of Enabling, Leading, and Caring, while contributing to key priorities in the Council Plan: Reducing Poverty and Inequality, Growing Our People, and Growing Our Communities.

## Enabling Communities

We enable people to access the help they need, when they need it—whether that's learning a new skill, finding a warm space, or getting support with everyday challenges.

- Libraries offered warm, welcoming spaces throughout the year, with free tea and coffee, board games, and puzzles encouraging people to stay longer and connect.
- Staff supported hundreds of residents with digital help, including buddy sessions, device support, and assistance with travel passes, blue badges, housing, and benefits.
- Our Area Offices in Brunton Hall and John Muir House provide safe space for customers to access face to face support for council services including welfare, housing, council tax and more.
- Staff across our teams have received trauma-informed training and are able to support 3<sup>rd</sup> party hate crime reports.
- Swap rails for coats and uniforms, free period products, food bank collection points, and pop-up services helped meet basic needs while promoting sustainability.
- Pop-up libraries in West Barns, at Community Days in Tranent and Musselburgh, and at East Lothian Community Hospital helped us reach people who may not be regular library users, ensuring access for all.

## Leading with Innovation and Inclusion

Our teams lead by example—adapting to challenges, co-creating new services, and working in partnership to meet local needs.

- Over 3,400 children's events were delivered, including Bookbug, STEM clubs, manga and Pokémon groups, and Summer Reading Challenge activities.
- Libraries supported Reading Schools accreditation, helping schools embed reading into everyday life. Public and School libraries worked together supporting class visits, transition activities, and cluster events.
- Inclusive programming for ASN families included sensory-friendly sessions and partnerships with STAND and ELPA.
- Staff worked with Families Together East Lothian, East Lothian Arts Service, and third sector groups to co-create activities based on local feedback.

# ENABLING, LEADING & CARING

## Caring for People and Places

We care deeply about the wellbeing of our communities—offering safe spaces, trusted relationships, and activities that bring people together.

- Libraries hosted health and wellbeing groups, including dementia-friendly sessions, cancer support, and reminiscence activities.
- Volunteer-led groups such as knit and natter, reminiscence sessions, and gardening clubs helped reduce isolation and foster connection.
- Staff built trusted relationships with individuals and families, often becoming the first point of contact for wider support services.
- Despite reduced opening hours over winter, visitor numbers rose by 9%, and book issues were down by just 1.6%—showing the continued value of our services.

Libraries and Customer Services continue to evolve with our communities—offering practical help, creative opportunities, and a warm welcome to everyone. Whether it's a child discovering a love of reading, an older adult finding connection, or a family getting support with everyday challenges, our service is here to help East Lothian thrive.



**Haddington Library**  
14 February 4P  
We've seen lots of you enjoying the sewing skills workshop that is run every Monday from 4:30pm and 6:30pm, but would love to welcome even more new faces!  
There are a number of wonderful volunteers with various skills who can help you take up your routers, mend your favourite dress, sew together that quilt you've had planned for years and many other things.  
Looking is required, just follow the link in [Flying for a Future](#) post below!





# EVENTS FOR ADULTS

'What do you love about your library?' "Everything!" From a regular knit and natter attendee who felt isolated in the community until joining the group and they are now seen out and about in the community talking to people.

Tranent Library team

Thank you for letting me work here today. It was appreciated!

Haddington Library Customer on remote working from the library space

Love the jigsaw idea!

Prestonpans Library customer

Lovely atmosphere. A calm, relaxing community space for all!

North Berwick Library customer

Truly appreciate the time you took to email me back. I was able to locate some things I didn't have on my ancestors because of them.

Local History customer

## Book Groups & Author Events

- Regular book groups ran in many libraries including some Walk and Talk groups.
- Author visits featured local and national writers, including events supported by Book Week Scotland and Night Owl Books.

## Craft & Creativity

- Groups offering social connection such as knit & natter, and zentangle were popular across branches.
- Musselburgh, Dunbar, and Haddington hosted creative writing clubs and art workshops.

## Digital Support

- Buddy sessions, drop-ins, and one-to-one help were offered in libraries including Musselburgh, Dunbar, and North Berwick.

## Health & Wellbeing

- Dementia-friendly sessions, cancer support groups, and ASN carers' meetups were held regularly.
- RNID offer drop in sessions in Musselburgh and Dunbar Libraries.

## Community & Social

- Libraries provided warm spaces with board games, newspapers, and refreshments.

## Local History & Culture

- Talks and workshops were delivered by the Local History Officer, including sessions for history societies and care homes.

## Notable Themes

- **Inclusion:** Events were designed to be accessible to older adults, neurodiverse individuals, and those with sensory needs.
- **Resilience:** Despite winter staffing reductions, libraries maintained consistent programming through flexible scheduling and cross-branch support.
- **Community-led:** Many activities were co-created with local groups, reflecting feedback and emerging needs.

# EVENTS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

“  
Lovely session. All the children loved it, it really grabbed their attention.  
Lots of fun.”

Nursery Class visit - Prestonpans

“  
When my daughter comes home from Bookbug she plays libraries and everyone has to call her Gillian!”

Bookbug Parent - Longniddry Library

“  
We love coming here as a family - so many great resources. Lovely staff too - thanks!”

Haddington Library

“  
Just wanted to let you know that I love visiting your library with my granddaughter. We love Bookbug and play session afterwards. We always feel welcome when we visit.”

Grandparent - Musselburgh Library

## **Bookbug & Storytime Sessions**

- Weekly sessions in every branch, often including Saturday and intergenerational formats with care homes and day centres.
- Bookbug remained the most attended activity offering parents and carers the opportunity to connect with other local families.

## **Arts & Crafts**

- Regular creative sessions focused on sustainability, recycling, and seasonal themes.
- Popular activities included salt dough decorations, mosaic making, and paper crafts.

## **STEM & Digital Clubs**

- Code Clubs, Nintendo Switch gaming, and Girls in Gaming sessions encouraged digital literacy and teamwork.

## **Reading & Writing for Pleasure**

- Manga, Pokémon, and creative writing clubs were introduced based on requests from children.
- Book groups for children and teens ran in several branches, supporting reader development.

## **Class & Nursery Visits**

- Libraries welcomed hundreds of class visits, supporting school topics and transitions.
- Loan boxes and Accelerated Reader stock were tailored to school needs.

## **Notable Themes and Trends**

- **Co-creation:** Many new clubs and activities were introduced following direct requests from children and young people.
- **Inclusion:** Programming was designed to support neurodiverse children and those with additional support needs.
- **Partnerships:** Libraries worked with schools, nurseries, and third sector organisations to deliver joined-up support.
- **Resilience:** Despite winter staffing reductions, children's programming remained consistent and well-attended.

# PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS

Libraries and Customer Services worked closely with a wide range of partners in 2024/25 to deliver inclusive, responsive, and community-focused services. These partnerships helped extend our reach, enhance our offer, and ensure that activities were shaped by local need.

## 🧡 Key Partnerships

- **Families Together East Lothian (FTEL)** Supported family wellbeing through drop-in sessions, ASN support, and co-created activities in libraries such as Dunbar, Ormiston and Tranent.
- **STAND (Stronger Together for Autism and Neurodivergence)** Collaborated on inclusive programming helping libraries become more welcoming for neurodiverse children and families.
- **East Lothian Play Association (ELPA)** Delivered play-based activities and supported inclusive library experiences for children and young people.
- **RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People), Sight Scotland, and RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People)** Provided training, awareness sessions, digital support, and wellbeing resources across multiple branches.
- **Fixing for a Future** Hosted mending and sustainability workshops in libraries and encouraged reuse and repair culture through community-led sessions
- **Education Working** in partnership with teaching colleagues the team supported learning by delivering project and fiction boxes to primary schools *“My class are becoming keen readers in P1 thanks to your services!” – Macmerry PS.* Reading Schools registration supported by secondary school librarians, public library class visits and CLPL events, rose on the previous year from 68% to 82.5%, with active applications increasing from 27.5% to 76%.

## 📖 Notable Projects

- **Pop-Up Libraries** With resources originally funded by the Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC) pop-up libraries were delivered in West Barns, at school cluster, transition and teacher training events for schools and at partner events to expand access to Council services and library resources in smaller communities
- **Information Hubs** Along with Connected Communities and East Lothian Health & Social Care, VCEL, the Ridge and others, we have been involved in bringing information hubs out into communities attending or hosting in libraries.
- **Musselburgh Community Garden** Led by community volunteer Kate Allan, and working with a number of partners including Musselburgh Area Partnership, Dementia Friendly East Lothian, East Lothian Community Payback Team and Musselburgh Horticultural Society the library garden has been transformed into a welcoming, heart of the community, supporting nature, sustainable food growth, and wellbeing. A junior gardening club started following requests from local children continues to grow in numbers.

# CHALLENGES & MITIGATIONS

Like many frontline services, Libraries and Customer Services faced a number of challenges in 2024/25, particularly around staffing and capacity. Despite these pressures, the team responded with flexibility, creativity, and a strong commitment to maintaining core services for our communities.

## ◆ Staffing and Capacity

A number of staff moved on to new opportunities during the year, and financial constraints meant that recruitment was limited. This led to reduced capacity across several locations, particularly during the winter period.

### Mitigation

To ensure consistency, opening hours in smaller libraries were temporarily reduced to one day per week for 12 weeks. Staff worked across multiple sites to maintain service continuity, and activities were rescheduled or relocated in consultation with affected groups.

## ◆ Winter Service Reductions

The decision to reduce hours over winter was difficult and we know it had an impact on our communities but it was necessary to manage sickness absence and staffing gaps.

### Mitigation

Libraries communicated changes clearly to customers and partners, offering alternative times and working with partners to identify alternative venues for key activities. Despite the reduction, visitor numbers increased by 9%, showing strong community support and continued demand.

## ◆ Financial Pressures

Ongoing budget constraints affected staffing levels and limited expansion opportunities.

### Mitigation

Libraries focused on partnership working, volunteer support, and co-created programming to maximise impact within available resources. Pop-up libraries and outreach helped extend reach without requiring permanent staffing increases.

In schools the addition in the previous 2 years of a small number of hours of support from Senior Customer Services Assistants reduced periods of closure for our secondary school libraries during unavoidable absence.

Despite these challenges, the service remained resilient and responsive—adapting to change while continuing to deliver high-quality, community-focused support across East Lothian. The service has again been shortlisted for Team of the Year in the Scottish Library & Information Council (SLIC) Awards.



# CONTACT US



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