

## **LIBRARIES & LIBRARIANS: MAKING A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SOCIETY**

### **Why public libraries?**

#### ***A unique combination of benefits***

Public libraries are much more than just a room with books and computers. They:

- Provide public access to the knowledge and information of the world
- Promote reading and literature to all ages and the whole of society
- Enable learning and literacy from cradle to grave
- Serve local people as a community hub to deliver essential services and activities:
  - By providing information for everyday living
  - As a gateway to local events and organisations
  - As a local meeting space and resource centre
  - Through exhibitions, author events and other activities
- Help users find and interpret information through their skilled staff
- Act as a cost-saver for society by combating ignorance, alienation, isolation, division and the lack of aspiration

Not only do libraries make a valuable contribution to our society, they stand for important values in our society including intellectual freedom, equality of opportunity, engaged citizenship, informed democracy, and a society in which people have the chance to achieve their potential.

### **Why paid professionals?**

#### ***A unique combination of skills***

Only paid professionals in public libraries:

- Guarantee quality levels and consistency of service delivery
- Use their specialist skills to:
  - Help others find and interpret information
  - Assist others to develop information handling skills, i.e. information literacy
  - Provide knowledge and access to all available resources
  - Work with children, those with literacy problems, and other disadvantaged groups
  - Guide libraries towards the provision of new digital information services
  - Work with local partners including schools, health trusts and the police to benefit the whole community e.g. promoting health and wellbeing within the local community
- Work with national partners to develop initiatives which enhance and extend the library service: e.g. The Summer Reading Challenge, Peoples Network, BIG Lottery, a partnership with the BBC encouraging adult literacy, a partnership with the NHS providing access to health information.

### **Librarians change lives**

When people talk about how public libraries have changed their lives, they always emphasise the importance of library staff. Library staff are helpful, knowledgeable, and trusted. They are not intimidating in the way other professionals can be. But just because they are unassuming, do not assume they are unimportant. It is the library staff who bring the library to life.