



# Cultural Services Annual Report

2024-2025





# Foreword

This year we have much to celebrate, and everyone involved should be proud of our achievements. I am delighted by our collective efforts, working with our partners to enhance our Cultural Services offerings.

We support our communities with lifelong learning opportunities that are accessible and inclusive, helping residents lead enriched lives. This report provides a glimpse into the array of work across our Cultural Services, reaching all parts of the county. We recognize the importance of cultural offers in supporting children as they begin their lives, contributing through learning programmes and cultural opportunities to improve their skills. Several of these programmes have received national recognition, with good practices shared across the country.

Situated in and working across the county, Cultural Services understand Lancashire's communities and their diverse needs, providing trusted information, support, and cultural activities. Delivering on the five objectives identified in the Cultural Services strategy earlier this year, the highlighted information in this report showcases our impressive offerings and their impact, enabling our communities to enjoy all that Lancashire has to offer.



## Our strategic objectives are:

- To create lifelong learning opportunities to enrich lives and to benefit from cultural services.
- To improve the inclusivity of our cultural offers enabling everyone to engage as audience, participant, or creative producer.
- To empower people to lead healthier and fulfilled lives through access to trusted information, a wide range of activities and positive social interaction.
- To inspire young people through a cultural offer enriching their lives to achieve better outcomes.
- To ensure our collections are relevant and accessible, contributing to pride of place and a sense of belonging for all our communities.

We contribute to the vision of Lancashire County Council, building a better Lancashire where everyone can live their best life through stronger communities, a growing economy, and high-quality public services.

Paul Turner, Director of Education, Culture and Skills  
Lancashire County Council

# Our Cultural Services' teams



## **Lancashire Libraries**

Across 64 library branches our library service is embedded at the heart of Lancashire communities providing access to books, online resources, trusted digital and health information, learning and culture. We are a universal service with an offer across our communities for people of all ages and backgrounds, from reading schemes for children to reading groups for adults. We provide a **Home Library Service**, delivering books and more to customers who can't get to the library, a **Mobile Library Service** providing a lifeline to the rural parts of the county, and **Prison Libraries**. The **Lancashire School Library Service** provides direct library and reading support to early years' settings, primary, special, academy and independent schools.

## **Lancashire Museum Service**

Our Museums enable people to explore the history of Lancashire. We operate Judges' Lodgings in Lancaster, Queen Street Mill in Burnley, Helmshore Mills in Rossendale and Gawthorpe Hall in Padiham. We provide guided tours at Lancaster Castle and manage Clitheroe Castle Museum. Our **Conservation and Collection team** provide specialist curatorial, conservation, technical and design support for museums and the public. We care for museum

collections and heritage, training museum staff, heritage professionals and the public in collection care and preservation and are responsible for the Lancashire Conservation Studios and Ribchester Roman Bath House.

**Heritage Learning Lancashire** are an award-winning cultural learning and education team, providing learning programmes for the primary, secondary, further, and higher education sectors, family learning and teacher training/professional development.

## **Lancashire Archives and Local History**

Lancashire Archives and Local History collects and preserves the County's unique archives, making 900 years of documentary collections available in person and online for exploring personal, family and community history. We are an Accredited Archive Service as designated by The National Archives, we deliver a schools, exhibitions and engagement programme, and are supported by an amazing team of volunteers and the Friends of Lancashire Archives.

## **Lancashire Music Service**

Lancashire Music Service provides tuition to meet the needs of young people wishing

to learn a musical instrument and sing. Nine Music Centres offer ensembles from beginner to intermediate levels. The five County Ensembles: two Symphony Orchestras; Jazz Orchestra; a Concert Band and a Brass Band, provide opportunities for our advanced musicians. Performance opportunities are available to all pupils at every stage of their musical journey.

## **Lancashire Outdoor Education Service**

The team offer a broad range of outdoor experiences, primarily to schools but also for youth and uniformed groups, families, and corporate groups. The team use the outdoors as a way for people to learn about themselves, others, and the environment. They encourage customers to try new things outside their comfort zone and explore their potential, making lifelong memories.

## **Cultural Development**

The team provide the strategic lead for Cultural Services in reading development, community engagement, health and wellbeing, cultural development and community funding including Crowdfund Lancashire.



# Highlights: Lifelong Learning

**Fun Palaces** is a free national event where communities share skills in arts, crafts, science, and digital activities. Cultural Services hosted 20 Fun Palaces across venues, attracting 6,544 visitors.

*“Brilliant, so many activities for my 8-year-old granddaughter and me, we both loved it!”*

Libraries developed **Lancs STEM Stars**, a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics programme of regular events delivered by library staff, enhanced by partnership organisations including the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Cultural Services partnered with the Open University to offer over 100 Lancashire residents a chance to attend **writing workshops**, helping to unlock creativity and provide lifelong learning opportunities.

Museums developed **weaving workshops** at Queen Street Mill giving people the opportunity to learn a new skill and use a handloom. *“Very enjoyable session, learnt lots and will take this new craft forward in 2025.”*

**Clarets Collected** created a new fan-led football archive at Burnley Library, providing volunteering opportunities, school and community activities, supported by Know Your Neighbourhood and Friends of Lancashire Archives.

Oxygen Arts and the Black British Ballet performed a **Windrush Ballet** ‘Island Movements’ at Accrington Library and Lancashire Archives attracting over 100 attendees and 60 children from local schools taking part in workshops.

Specialist Museum Conservators and Curators delivered a series of courses from their **Heritage Skills Programme** providing an opportunity for a wide range of individuals to learn skills about supporting Heritage sites across the North-West. 22 individuals completed the 12-week course with participants now undertaking volunteering, further education or employment.



Library visitor footfall

**2,629,182**



Issued

**2,997,578**

books

Heritage Learning  
Lancashire delivered

**66** 

training and development  
sessions with teachers



**3,333,685**

eBook/eNewspaper/  
eMagazine downloads.



**63,511**

**new library members**



Hosted

**356**

Lancashire Adult  
Learning courses in  
libraries with

**1934**

enrolments.





# Highlights: Inclusive Cultural Offers

Clitheroe Library and Clitheroe Castle Museum partnered with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to host a celebration event highlighting **Braille's 200-year anniversary** highlighting the impact on the lives of individuals living with sight loss. This showcased resources across the council.

During **SEN (Special Educational Needs) week**, Lancashire School Library Service worked in partnership with six Special Schools to provide a bespoke visit from our Book Bus to encourage reading for pleasure.

Lancashire School Library Service worked in partnership with **House Project** to provide paid employment for a young person leaving care after a successful period of volunteering with the service.

Conservation and Collections team and Lancashire Archives worked with the **Project Search** to provide supported internship opportunities to young people 18 to 24 year olds with learning disabilities and autism in Lancashire.



Lancashire Outdoor Education extended their reputation for quality **short breaks for young people with special educational needs** and disabilities in Lancashire and are now offering this for nearby counties. Lancashire libraries were awarded the '**Libraries of Sanctuary**' status.

Lancashire Music Service created an **accessible instrument and music technology library**, the first of its kind. Specialist instruments were chosen for maximum engagement with pupils of all abilities, including non-verbal students and those with limited movement. The initiative has won two national awards.

Lancashire artists of all abilities were invited to take part in **Lancashire Artist of the Year** by entering their original artworks depicting Lancashire views in spring, summer, autumn or winter. The winning paintings featured in the county council's Lancashire Artist of the Year 2025 calendar, with the proceeds, £2,548, going to support activities for Lancashire's care leavers.



**600**

Home Library  
Service customers  
were supported  
each month by

**77**

volunteers.



Provided  
library services  
to all five  
prisons in  
Lancashire.

Delivered



**29,765**

events in libraries



Over  
**110**

children from five schools  
took part in Lancashire  
Storytelling Festival.



**79,285**

Mobile Library  
issues.

Lancashire Music  
Service provided  
Ableton software and  
hardware to over

**100** 

schools, providing  
access to previously  
unavailable music  
technology to  
thousands of children  
and young people.







# Highlights: Healthier and Fulfilled Lives

Lancashire Archives worked with women's group Aawaz to co-curate an exhibition sharing the heritage of Accrington's South Asian heritage community as part of the **Keeping East Lancashire in the Picture** project.

The Museum Service grew its cultural offer for **local groups and tourists** visiting Lancashire. Tours tailored to individual groups' interests gave an opportunity for participants to learn more of Lancashire's great heritage.

Libraries worked with the Reading Agency to recruit 20 teenage **Community Champions** to plan activities engaging young people with the 'Reading Well for Teens' book collection and Universal Health offer. 14 Champions also engaged with Wellbeing Ambassador training delivered by Lancashire Mind.

Following entries from choirs from across the county our **Lancashire Choir of the Year** judges selected six finalists to

perform at the concert in November. Red Rosettes Show Chorus won the Lancashire Choir of the Year 2024 with Barton Road Community Choir winning the 'People's Choice' from the 3,400 online votes.

79 Lancashire culture and sport projects had their funds boosted through **Crowdfund Lancashire** with external pledges raising over £460,000 to support their crowdfunding campaigns through additional grants, individual donations and backing from local businesses.

**Wi-Fi printing** launched in libraries in November 2024 with 37,382 prints to end of March 2025.

**Lancashire Outdoor Education** offered a broad range of outdoor experiences with over 40 activities to schools, youth and uniformed groups, families and corporate groups, and supported Duke of Edinburgh awards.







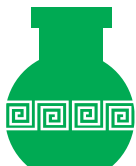
Archives supported

**133**

volunteers contributing

**5764**

hours of their time



Museums supported

**124**

volunteers who contributed 6,835 hours of their time.



**220**

Memory Box loans to support reminiscence events.



**25,422**

books loaned to library Reading Groups



**7**

new library Friends' groups.



Tackling digital poverty

**1041**

SIM cards provided as part of National Data Bank Scheme.



Exercise in libraries programme expanded.



Libraries supported

**4959**

interactions to enable people to upskill and learn new digital skills.





# Highlights: Inspiring Young People



Our early years **Little Steps** programme received national recognition from the Campaign for Learning's Family Learning Awards, winning the award for **Family Learning in the Early Years**.

Heritage Learning Lancashire welcomed over 1,000 pupils to the Museum of Lancashire for the **Secret War Special Event** covering code-breaking, aerial reconnaissance, D-Day landings, and the Special Operations Executive.

Cultural Services support 160 **Culture Hack young volunteers** in our libraries and Cultural Service venues. In 24/25 we welcomed 87 new Culture Hacks and a new volunteering opportunity in Lancashire Archives.

Lancashire School Library Service provided 1170 loans to special and nursery schools and over 20,000 pupils engaged in **reading and learning activities**.

**Lancashire Sings** inspired young people to enjoy music, reaching around 4,000 Key Stage 1-5 pupils from across the county through large-scale performances. "All the children that we brought went back to school feeling amazing."

Queen Street Mill Young Creatives, a youth-led group at Queen Street Mill worked with the Heritage Learning Lancashire and Museums team to create **Retro Rollers** - a highly successful free roller disco event in the mill, aimed at families and young people. The group was later nominated for a Burnley Culture award.

**Lancashire Outdoor Education** engaged 11,848 participants in an outdoor experience with 235 schools, furthering our contribution towards young people's education across Lancashire. Our centres are amongst the top five most popular destination for Lancashire schools of all the school trips registered on the LCC Educational Visits Evolve system.



9,446

Children registered for our 'Reading Heroes' summer scheme.

17,470



children have participated in our Reading Schemes



1,941

pupils attended online author events as part of 'Fantastic Book Awards'.



Children from 114 primary schools voted for their favourite 'Brilliant Book Award' read.

11,848

participants and 235 schools visited Lancashire Outdoor Education centres.

Heritage Learning Lancashire delivered creative learning sessions to

20,196



pupils.



22,461

books read by children taking part in the 'Reading Heroes' Summer reading programme.





# Highlights: Collections and Pride of Place



Lancashire Archives and Local History worked with **Goofus Theatre** on the Heritage Fund project, **Clomping About**, bringing puppetry and local history together in Lancashire Libraries.

Clitheroe Castle Museum attracted over 600 people as part of the nationwide **Festival of Archaeology**. Eight events were supported by Lancashire Archives, Conservation and Collections and Clitheroe Library including talks, junior archaeologist workshops, armchair archaeology, and a tour of the castle site.

Over 187,000 people saw museum collections as part of **Lancashire in 50 objects**. This told the story of 7000 years of Lancashire's history, geography, and people. Objects ranged from Viking treasure, weaver's tools, a Bond Minicar and child's crib which celebrated the wealth and diversity and innovation of our heritage – displayed in over 40 libraries across the county. A further 4,884 page views of the 50 Objects webpage linked to more in-depth information, and it was viewed by people worldwide.

As a host for the British Museum **Portable Antiquities Scheme** (PAS) we recorded archaeological finds discovered by the public in Lancashire and Cumbria. These finds are critical in advancing knowledge, telling stories of past communities and furthering public interest in the past.

Lancashire Archives partnered with the Preston Caribbean Carnival committee to create a major new **Carnival Exhibition** celebrating Caribbean histories and 50 years of carnival.

Students from UCLAN assessed the museum collection of Skelmersdale New Town models as part of the **Alternative Futures** Project. The models are being used to highlight the importance of Skelmersdale and to engender pride in the town.

In April the **Princess Royal** visited **Helmshore Mills Textile Museum**. She enjoyed seeing our historic textile machinery in operation, a demonstration of the waterwheel and the Spinning Floor of Whittaker's Mill.



**154**

new collections accepted  
into Lancashire Archives and

**10,606**

new catalogue  
descriptions created.

**80**

different learning  
sessions offered  
within museums  
or school  
outreach led by  
Heritage Learning  
Lancashire.



**134,544**

visitor footfall to museums and  
heritage venues including **12,661**  
visitors from schools.



**1,137**

new objects recorded  
as part of the Portable  
Antiquities Scheme.

**52,762**

books loaned by School  
Library Service to support a  
wide range of learning topics.



**11,441**

individual pieces  
loaned from the music  
and drama collections.



Over

**300**

people attended the Heritage Open Day at County Hall  
learning of the architecture and history of the area.





# How to find out more

You can also read a full version of the 2024-2025 annual report via the QR code.

**Follow us on X, Instagram and Facebook**

**@LancsLibraries @LancsArchives @LancsMuseums  
@LancsOutdoorEd @LancMusicHub @LancashireSLS  
@HLLancashire**







