

Introduction

This report covers the final quarter of 2019 / 2020 and the first quarter of 2020 / 2021. There is a significant contrast between the two periods due to the coronavirus crisis which forced libraries to close one week before the end of March and throughout the whole of Q1 of 2020 / 2021. Therefore, the Q4 aspect of the report covers the usual areas of performance and the Q1 part covers those services that the library provided throughout the lockdown period.

2019 / 2020 Q4

Visitors and issues

Quarter	Visitors				
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Q1	10453	11046	11471	10623	13848
Q2	15279	16345	16058	16893	17032
Q3	10149	11366	11033	11658	11698
Q4	11159	10482	10580	10403	8743

	Book Issues				
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
	9536	15519	16250	17487	17746
	11299	19808	21935	22293	22458
	10338	14856	15640	16223	17235
	11545	15657	16050	18147	17354

Average	11760	12310	12286	12394	12830
Totals	47040	49239	49142	49577	51321

10680	16460	17469	18538	18698
42718	65840	69875	74150	74793

* library closed for 4 days for refurbishment in April 2016

The visitor and issue figures for 2019 / 2020 are particularly encouraging, given the impact that the coronavirus crisis had towards the end of the year. The library closed on 20th March due to the coronavirus crisis, meaning it was closed for 11 days of the year. Prior to that, people were starting to follow government guidance and were venturing out less and less, which also impacted the Q4 figures. Despite these factors, the library recorded the highest annual visitor and issue figures in the last 5 years.

Attendees at events and activities

Quarter	Total number of attendees at events and activities									
	Total Attendees					Sessions				
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Q1	1318	2187	2225	1690	1955	40	58	63	83	89
Q2	4239	4227	4542	4609	4747	74	75	94	107	104
Q3	2360	2361	2120	1736	1987	52	56	76	79	80
Q4	2377	1525	1929	1972	1589	56	70	76	86	69
Average	2574	2575	2704	2502	2570	56	65	77	89	86
Totals	10294	10300	10816	10007	10278	222	259	309	355	342

As the above table shows, Kesgrave Library held 342 events and activities during the year, attracting a total of 10,278 attendees. The Q4 figures were down compared to Q4 the previous year, purely because of the coronavirus crisis, but the overall number of attendees was actually slightly up on the previous year.

Summary of activities

- Volunteers from the **Sutton Hoo Roadshow** visited Kesgrave Library on 29th January, bringing with them the famous mask and other items for customers to look at and hold. This event was particularly popular with older customers. It had been planned for them to return during the summer, but this has had to be postponed until 2021.
- **Afternoon book club** continued to be very popular during the quarter with between 9 and 12 regularly attending and a total of 14 enrolled.
- **Lego Club** went from strength to strength. A new volunteer, who is working towards his Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award, joined the team, helping with these sessions.
- **A young volunteer** joined in February, working every other Thursday afternoon for an hour. He wanted to volunteer in an environment where he could engage with the public and give something back to the community. He has proved invaluable, as we had some customers in who could not speak English and we were trying to help them using google translate. Our volunteer's first language is Spanish, and he was able to translate to library staff what the customers were requesting, enabling them help find what they were looking for.

2020 / 2021 Q1

Adapting to the crisis

The coronavirus crisis has obviously had a huge impact on society since mid-March. Libraries were closed on 20th March, and staff quickly adapted to the situation by starting to deliver activities online via social media. Staff had to quickly familiarise themselves with how to upload and live stream to Facebook and other platforms – as well as build up the courage to perform ‘live’ on the internet! Suffolk Libraries has also launched a new telephone service called ‘Suffolk Lifeline’ whereby library staff are calling customers for a chat, check they’re ok and let them know that we’re still here and thinking of them.

So, although Kesgrave Library was closed throughout Q1, staff were still busy supporting the community, even though they didn’t have a library to work from.

Kesgrave Facebook stats during lockdown

The table below shows the number of different activities that staff at Kesgrave Library posted to the library Facebook page during quarter 1, most of which were filmed activities

Activity	Number	Engagement
Wordplay	25	597
Craft	22	917
Leo	73	740
Quiz	63	735
Storytime	2	33
Total	185	3022

So, 185 activities were posted which attracted 3,022 engagements. In addition to this, staff posted other content to the library Facebook page throughout quarter 1.

Note that engagement indicates interactions beyond just simply seeing a post. Facebook defines engagement as including all clicks, not only comments, likes and shares.

It is important to point out that some of the same people may have engaged in different content. Therefore, the numbers for each engagement do not relate to unique users, and therefore nor do the totals.

Throughout Q1, an average of 41.2 people per day engaged with the Kesgrave Library Facebook page, with the highest single number of daily engagements 175.

Summary of activities

- Staff have been delivering the following activities and content online through the library Facebook page:
 - Children's **WordPlay sing-along sessions**, 2-3 times per week. Staff have been welcoming children by name (with parents' permission) and taking song requests!
 - **Children's craft sessions**, 2 x per week. How to make crafts based on popular books or special days e.g. VE Day and International Dinosaur Day. These have been shared by other libraries, customers, and Suffolk Libraries Facebook.
 - **Daily Lego challenges**, Monday to Saturday. These have included videos, which a library volunteer has been creating. The challenges include a Quidditch tower, a volcano and a rainbow.
 - **Daily Quizzes**, Monday to Saturday, with Friday's quiz aimed specifically at children.
 - **Wildlife Watch**, Monday to Friday. Customers have been invited to send in photos of wildlife and flowers they have seen on their daily walk with contributions from staff.
 - **Weekly challenge** - things to look out for when out exercising.
 - **Story time sessions** for children.
 - **Short book reviews**.
 - Regularly **posting E-library content** to promote Suffolk Libraries' digital services
 - Celebrated **National Pet Month in April**, inviting customers to share pictures of their pets, which was very popular.
 - **Shared content from authors** such as audio books, how to make items, popular stories being read, e.g. Nick Butterworth's Percy the Park Keeper.

In addition to the engagement with customers through Facebook, staff also stayed in touch with older and more vulnerable customers during lockdown. Most were being called every 2 or 3 weeks to have a chat and check on their wellbeing, although a small number of particularly vulnerable people received a weekly call. The library manager kept in touch with all regular library volunteers, including the library friends group members, by phone and email. In total, 127 calls were made during Q1 by Kesgrave Library staff.

Staff kept a record of each call they make along with a brief description of the call. The library manager made most of the customer contacts, as she works the highest number of hours of any staff member at Kesgrave Library. Here is a small selection of the manager's call descriptions during Q1:

"Customer had phoned the library when she found out we were closing; was quite upset we were closing for foreseeable future. She mentioned to another staff member she was feeling lonely. I rang her and we had a general chat. She mentioned the difficulties she had been having getting prescriptions for her husband, but it was being sorted. I asked if she would like me to ring each week and she said yes. Very pleased I had taken the time to ring."

"Regular customer with underlying medical conditions. Wanted to check she was ok. Very pleased to hear from me. We talked through when the books were due back and what I was doing now the library was closed. To ring every week."

"Customer who lives alone and is also one of our volunteers. Had a good chat about all sorts, including when the library would re-open and what to do with library books that have been read. To phone again in a couple of weeks. Very pleased to have been contacted."

"General chat asking how customer is. Talked about books and when they are due back. She has asked if I can ring again next week, as she is on her own."

"General chat and well-being check-up. Asked about the e-library in particular Pressreader, as would like a daily newspaper. Talked them through how to set this up. Chatted about what was I doing as the library was closed. When would we be open? To ring again when have an answer as to what sort of service we will be providing."

"General chat and well-being chat. Praised Kesgrave Library and the role we have in the community. Said they were missing coming in. Asked what I was up to - was I working? Will ring again in few weeks."

"Weekly call, as customer is feeling lonely. Talked about loads of different things."

"Customer very pleased to have been called. Said a few times, how nice it was of me. Have arranged to call every 2/3 weeks."

"Really enjoy talking to Mrs X and she is so grateful to me, for taking the time to ring each week. We always chat when she comes in the library as well. I enjoy phoning and chatting to her each week. It cheers me up."

Mrs X made me feel my call was really important to them. She told me, I was valuable, as I worked in the local library and that I needed to take care of myself. It made me feel my role in the library and community was worthwhile and appreciated and that I was valued."

"Customer very pleased I rang. Said it was 'Nice of me to ring' and she 'would love it if I rang again'. Makes you realised that people are feeling lonely and isolated and that contact is really appreciated. Really enjoyed the chat."

"Really enjoyed the chat - both are regular customers who I know very well. Mrs X said, 'We're missing you' which made me feel my call was really appreciated."

Reintroducing services

It is unknown when libraries will be able to return to anything approaching what we regard as 'normal', but towards the end of Q1 library staff were preparing to reopen the doors to customers once more to provide a 'select and collect' book reservation service. As we move forward through quarter two, more services – such as book browsing and computer usage – will be reintroduced, albeit on a restricted basis and subject to various safety measures.

Conclusion

Kesgrave has become the busiest library in Suffolk in relation to size over the last couple of years. 2019 / 2020 was once more an impressive year. The library performed well in terms of book borrowing, visitor figures and event and activities, despite the final 4-6 weeks of the year being impacted by the coronavirus crisis.

Quarter 1 of 2020 / 2021 has been a challenge, as staff have had to quickly adapt to new ways of reaching the community. However, as the above report demonstrates, staff have retained their engagement with customers by creating a wide range of content – including filmed activities – which they have shared through the library Facebook page. They have also helped to reduce social isolation and loneliness by making regular contact with older and more vulnerable library customers throughout lockdown.