

Introduction

After a year which was severely disrupted by covid-enforced closures and service restrictions, 2021 / 2022 saw Kesgrave make significant strides towards recovery. There is still a way to go before performance figures reach pre-pandemic levels as many people remain cautious about mingling with others whilst some have got out of the habit of visiting the library. However, the figures are clearly heading in the right direction.

Issues and visitors

Visitors							
Qtr	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22
Q1	10453	11046	11471	10623	13848	0	3015
Q2	15279	16345	16058	16893	17032	2070	4654
Q3	10149	11366	11033	11658	11698	9421	8727
Q4	11159	10482	10580	10403	8743	4388	8293
Avg.	11760	12310	12286	12394	12830	5293	6172
Tot.	47040	49239	49142	49577	51321	15879	24689

Book Issues							
15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	
9536	15519	16250	17487	17752	0	7178	
11299	19808	21935	22293	22475	5619	14533	
10338	14856	15640	16223	17235	6701	12641	
11545	15657	16050	18147	17354	2513	13180	
10680	16460	17469	18538	18704	4944	11883	
42718	65840	69875	74150	74816	14833	47532	

Covid restrictions were relaxed in July 2021 – a couple of weeks into quarter two – which is reflected in the increase in visitors and book issues. The high issue figure in quarter two is due to the Summer Reading Challenge, which is always particularly successful at Kesgrave.

Event and activity attendees

Total number of attendees at events and activities												
Quarter	Children			Adults			Total Attendees			Sessions		
	18/19	19/20	21/22	18/19	19/20	21/22	18/19	19/20	21/22	18/19	19/20	21/22
Q1	915	1085	37	775	870	30	1690	1955	67	83	89	10
Q2	2620	2688	235	1989	2059	178	4609	4747	413	107	104	33
Q3	950	1131	319	786	856	265	1736	1987	584	79	80	51
Q4	1094	833	608	878	756	466	1972	1589	1074	86	69	69
Average	1395	1434	300	1107	1135	235	2502	2570	535	89	86	41
Totals	5579	5737	1199	4428	4541	939	10007	10278	2138	355	342	163

The relaxing of restrictions in July 2021 enabled libraries to hold events and activities much more easily, as is reflected in the above figures.

Activity summary

- **Word Play sessions** (Tot Rock, Baby Bounce and Story Time) – relaunched on 19th May, initially in the community centre to enable social distancing, later moving back to the library when restrictions were relaxed. A 'Bounce Back' grant from East Suffolk District Council covered the additional cost of the community centre hire.
- **Summer Reading Challenge** - despite the restrictions, Kesgrave had a very successful Summer Reading Challenge with 293 children signing up and 204 finishing all six books. This equates to a 70% finish rate which was well above the county average. Helping staff with the challenge were 18 volunteers who gave up 240 hours to run the sessions throughout the school summer holiday.
- **Beach Bonkers, 13th August 2021** - this event was held in the library garden and was paid for using the East Suffolk District Council Bounce Back grant. It was very successful with 61 people attending the

two-hour session which was based on the Summer Reading Challenge theme of Wild World Heroes and how to protect the planet's oceans.

- **Magic shows** - On Sunday 5th September and Thursday 28th October - the library ran two Mr Bean magic shows in the Community Centre to enable families to attend in 'bubbles'. These events were paid for by the Bounce Back grant and included a free book for all the children attending.
- **Volunteers** - Kesgrave has welcomed back all their volunteers, of which there are currently 19. They fulfil a variety of roles including general library duties and helping run the craft sessions. Five of our young volunteers are currently completing their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh award.
- **Home Library Service** - this has recently expanded at Kesgrave, and we now have two volunteers delivering and collecting books for our house-bound customers.
- **Sunday Crafts** - over the summer we reintroduced Sunday Crafts by providing bags containing the elements customers needed to complete the craft at home. From October, customers have been coming into the library to make the crafts again. Each customer has a basket with all the elements in and customers are placed on tables in 'bubbles.' The reintroduction of this activity has proved very popular with numbers beginning to return to pre-covid figures.
- **Book group** - In November, the library welcomed back their evening book group customers. This has proved very successful with new members joining. During March, the afternoon Top Time book group for customer's over 55 also returned. These sessions are being run in the community centre to enable distancing, which has been appreciated by attendees. Kesgrave Library Friends have funded the cost the room hire paying for the room hire through the Bounce Back grant that they received.
- **Select and Collect** - The library continues to offer Select and Collect for vulnerable customers with a number preferring to use this service rather than come into the library.
- **Lateral flow tests** - The library was a collection point for free lateral flow tests.
- **Printing and photocopying** - the library has seen a marked increase in customers using this facility.
- **Competitions** - the library has run two competitions for younger customers which were very popular. One was based around the Summer Reading Challenge, and another was a Christmas colouring competition. Kesgrave Library Friends purchased the competition prizes.
- **Christmas Shop** - the library had a small Christmas shop supporting two local charities as well as Suffolk Libraries. The shop sold charity cards, wrapping paper, gift bags and gift tags.
- **Christmas gifts** - Kesgrave Library Community Group purchased books as Christmas gifts for all the children who attend Tot Rock, Baby Bounce and Story Time.
- **PC Hannah Canning** has been running a monthly drop-in session at the library to enable customers to pop along and talk through any issues concerning them. She is also security marking children's bikes and raising awareness of a police presence in the area.
- **Outreach sessions** - the library has begun to offer its outreach sessions again with three Year 4 class visits from Heath Primary School and more planned for next term. We have also had a successful visit from the Humpty Dumpty Playgroup and will soon be running a session with them at the playgroup.
- **Suffolk Libraries Day** - the library ran a successful tombola and children's colouring competition to celebrate. The competition prizes were donated by Kesgrave Library Community Group.

Conclusion

After a hugely disrupted 2020 / 2021, the last year has seen the library gradually return to a level of normality as covid restrictions were relaxed and more people started to return. Performance figures reflect this, with visits, issues and activity figures all showing an increase. The wide range of initiatives, services and activities that the library has run throughout the year is also hugely encouraging, and the support of the Kesgrave Library Friends is much appreciated. Covid is, of course, still prevalent and many people are still understandably cautious about mixing in public buildings. So, although the performance is showing a significant improvement since restrictions were relaxed, it may be a while before it reaches pre-pandemic levels.

We are extremely appreciative of the support provided by Kesgrave Town Council which has contributed to Kesgrave Library becoming one of the busiest small libraries in Suffolk.