Libraries Children's PLUS

County Library and Information Service

Research study for
County Library and Information Service

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1 Executive Summary

The Children's PLUS survey is a three-yearly survey of children under the age of 16 to find out children's usage and perceptions of library services. This information will be used to improve library services according to the needs of the young people who use them.

Questionnaires were sent to all 96 libraries across the county, including mobile libraries. Staff were asked to offer questionnaires to all children under the age of 16 who came into the library. In total 7,567 questionnaires were returned over the seven day survey period from all 96 libraries. Fieldwork began on Monday 26 September and finished on Sunday 2 October.

The main findings were that:

- The children completing the survey had an average age of just over seven years, though the highest number of replies came from ten year olds.
- Older children were less likely to reply though they were individually more likely to use the library more often.
- More girls filled in the questionnaire (57%) than boys (43%).
- One in six of the children replying visit the library more than once a week, about a third visit once a week and about half either visit less than once a week, or this is their first visit.
- Two-thirds of the children who came to the library came to borrow a book, and the same proportion said they did so. A fifth came to use the internet or a computer and again the same proportion did.
- Almost nine in ten children rated the library overall and library staff as good (both 88%).
- The top suggestions were to improve computer facilities and increase opening hours.

The main recommendations are listed below.

- Publicise these positive results amongst library staff.
- Encourage more help from staff to children, especially in mobile libraries and for older children with homework.
- Consider adding toilets and baby-change facilities to libraries.
- Try to add newer stocks of books, music and DVDs.
- Perform the survey again in 3 years time, to enable performance to be compared, and the success of any initiatives to be evaluated.
- Suggest some changes to the wording of the questions to the Institute of Public Finance.
- Conduct further analysis on the distance travelled by visitors.
- Consider investigating the reasons why older children visit the library less and are less satisfied. And why those older children that do still come to the library visit more frequently. For example by focus groups of users and non-users.

2 Introduction

The Children's Public Library User Survey (PLUS) was commissioned by County Library and Information Service (CLIS) as a key element of their survey strategy. It is run on a three-yearly cycle to find out children's usage and perceptions of library services. All local authorities are required to submit satisfaction figures for children's satisfaction with libraries. The findings are based on survey forms completed in libraries across the county. The questions are set and reviewed by a committee of Library professionals and representatives of the Institute of Public Finance.

3 Research Objectives

Children's PLUS was undertaken to help plan library services according to the needs of the young people who use them. The survey will give them the information for the Public Library Service Standard (PLSS8) that requires an overall children's satisfaction rate. In 2002 overall satisfaction was 75%, which was below the set standard of 77%. This was only a sample of libraries rather than a census of all libraries, and so these figures cannot be directly compared to this year's research project.

The main objectives of the survey were to find out:

- how often children use the library and who they come with;

- what children use the library for;

- children's opinions of the different aspects of the service offered at libraries across the county; and

- children's ideas for improving libraries.

A copy of the Children's PLUS survey form can be found in Appendix 2.

4 Methodology

The Children's PLUS survey is a 4-page self-completion questionnaire. In previous years the survey has taken place in approximately one third of libraries. In 2005 the survey covered the whole service, including mobile libraries, and questionnaires were sent to all 96 libraries in the county. Each library was assigned a unique location code so responses from each library could be compared. Front-line staff at each library were asked to give every child under the age of 16 who visited the library a survey form. If a child refused to complete a form, it was recorded. The survey took place over a seven day period. Fieldwork began on Monday 26 September 2005 and ended on Sunday 2 October 2005.

No incentive for respondents to complete the forms was given. In total 7,567 questionnaires were returned over the seven day survey period from all 96 libraries.

All data are unweighted, with figures based on all respondents unless otherwise stated.

5 Limitations

The table below shows the approximate sample tolerances that apply to the results in this survey. Sampling tolerances vary with the size of the sample as well as the percentage results.

Number of Respondents	50/50 + / -	30/70 + / -	10/90 + / -
3000	2%	2%	1%
4500	1%	1%	1%
7500	1%	1%	1%

On a question where 50% of the people in a sample of 7,500 respond with a particular answer, the chance are 95 out of 100 that the answer would be between 49% and 51% (ie +/- 1%), versus a complete coverage of the entire customer base using the same procedure.

Since the population sampled is a sizeable fraction of the overall population, the actual sampling tolerances will actually be slightly smaller than the figures quoted above.

The following table shows what the percentage differences between two samples on a given statistic must be greater than, to be statistically significant.

Size of Sample A	Size of Sample B	50/50	70/30	90/10
200	200	10%	9%	6%
100	5000	10%	9%	6%
200	1000	8%	7%	5%
1000	6000	3%	3%	2%
2000	2000	3%	3%	2%
3000	4000	2%	2%	1%
4000	4000	2%	2%	1%

(Confidence interval at 95% certainty for a comparison of two samples)

For example, for one sample of 1000 and another of 6000, responses in each at around 50% of responses in each category to be compared, the difference needs to be over 3% to be statistically significant. This is to say that the difference is not due to chance alone.

Some of the samples in the survey are too small to allow for comparisons to be made between different groups, for example in some of the smaller libraries and mobile libraries only a handful of questionnaires were completed. Where bases are less than 100 comparisons have not been made.

When looking at the profile of library users bear in mind that we don't know if some of the children that completed the questionnaires were more likely than others to fill one in. So certain types of young library users may have been missed from the profile, given in section 6.2, even though they use the library because they didn't fill in a questionnaire.

6 Main Research Findings

A marked up questionnaire of the survey results can be found in Appendix 1.

6.1 Number of survey responses

All of the libraries were asked to offer a questionnaire to every child under 16 who entered the library over a seven day period running from 26 September to the 2 October. In total during the seven day period 7,567 questionnaires were completed across 96 libraries.

On the whole, there were more questionnaires completed on Monday, the first day of the survey, and Saturday. There were fewer questionnaires completed on Wednesday than any other weekday. This is likely to be because many libraries are closed on Wednesday or only open for half a day. In actual terms, the numbers of completed questionnaires over the survey period are shown in the table below. The CLIS may wish to compare this profile with actual daily visit statistics.

Day	No. of completed questionnaires
Monday	1,812
Tuesday	1,299
Wednesday	608
Thursday	1,097
Friday	1,110
Saturday	1,449
Sunday	35

Base: all respondents (7,410)

Chart 1 - *Volume of responses per day*

Monday 24%
Tuesday 18%
Wednesday 8%
Thursday 15%
Friday 15%
Saturday 20%
Sunday 0%
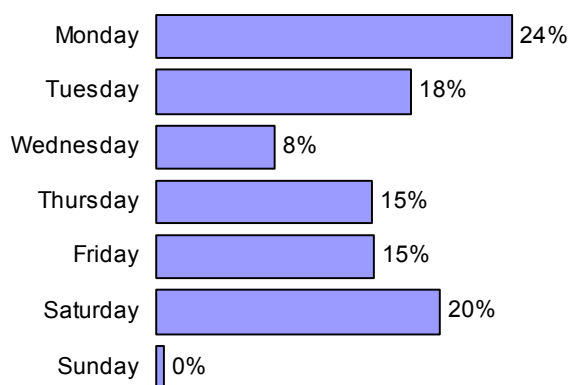
Base: all respondents (7,410)

The libraries with the most completed questionnaires over the survey period are Chorley (262), Harris (239), Morecambe (219), Lancaster (201), and Colne (200). There is a full list of number of completed questionnaires by library in appendix 1.

The larger libraries also had more questionnaires completed at weekends than the smaller ones. This is because these are the libraries that are most likely to be open at weekends.

6.2   Profile of library users

There were a number of demographic questions in the questionnaire that will allow a profile of library users under the age of 16 to be created. These questions included asking them their gender, age and ethnicity. When looking at the results for these questions please bear in mind that it cannot be determined if these are the children who are most likely to use libraries or if they were simply more likely to complete a questionnaire. A comparison of makeup for the survey with the libraries' membership records would be useful to check for any demographic differences.

6.2.1   Gender of library users

There were more girls (57%) who filled in a questionnaire than there were boys (43%). This could be because there are more girls that use the libraries in general or it could be because girls were more likely to fill in a questionnaire.

Chart 2 -   *Gender of library users*

I am a girl	57%
I am a boy	43%
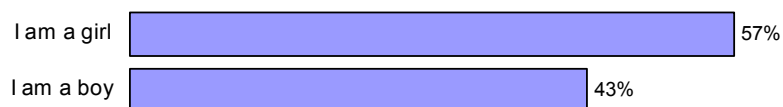
Base: all respondents (7,481)

Children aged under-five completing the questionnaire are more likely to be girls (53%) than boys (47%). This trend increases amongst older groups, 58% of those aged 5 to 10 are girls, and 60% of 11 to 15 year olds are girls. There were no other significant differences, for example in ethnic group, usage or library level.

6.2.2 Age of library users

Respondents were also asked to give their age. Chart 3 gives the distribution in the age of library users completing the questionnaire. It shows that within the under-fives category three-year-olds are the highest users of libraries, it then drops again when children get to school age. Within the five to ten age group usage of libraries steadily increases until the age of ten when it peaks. When children are in high school completion steadily drops until the lowest point is reached at age fifteen. However older children that do visit are more likely to do so more frequently.

Chart 3 - *Distribution in the age of library users*
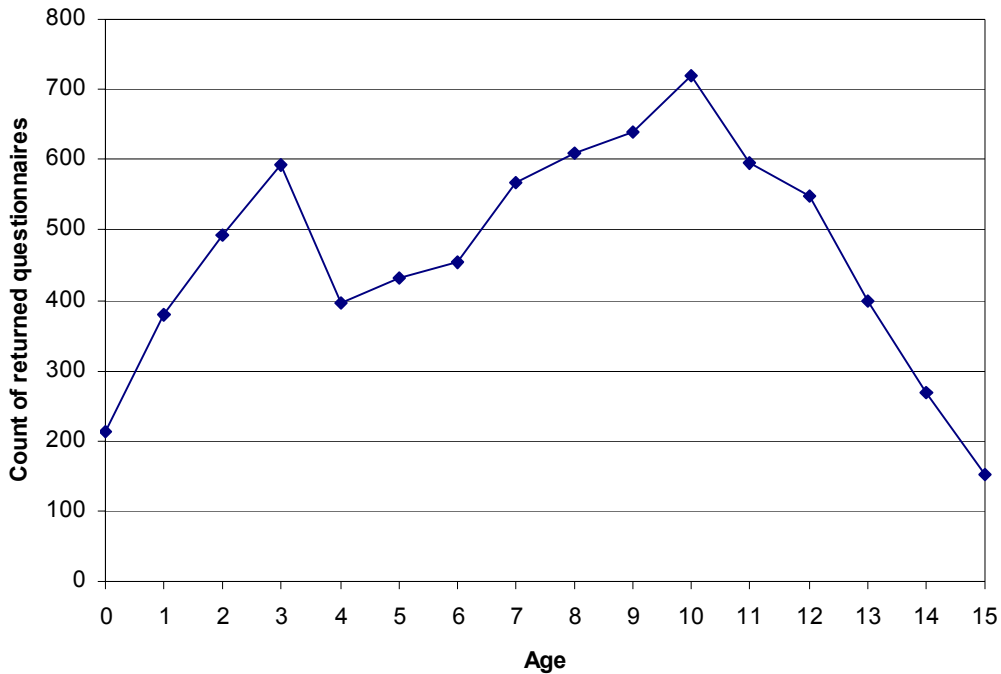
Base: all respondents (7,461)

Older children (11 to 15s) are more likely to use the library once a week or more (30%) than come less than once a week (22%). The under-fives are more likely to use the library less than once a week (31%) than once a week or more (25%). The users of the Harris library (level 1) are more likely to be between 11 and 15 (38%) compared to all the other levels of library.

6.2.3 Ethnicity of library users

The majority of children who use the library are white (87%). Of the non-white ethnic groups Asian (8%) children completed the most questionnaires, followed by Mixed (4%) and Black (1%).

Chart 4 - *Ethnicity of library users*

White	87%
Asian	8%
Mixed	4%
Black	1%
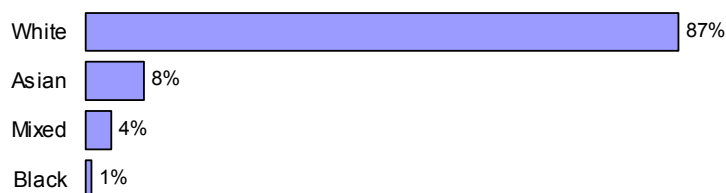
Base: all respondents (7,167)

The non-white children completing the survey have an older age make-up than white respondents. The average age of non-white children completing the survey is 9.0 and white respondents 7.2.

White children are more likely to visit less than once a week (92%) rather than weekly or more (82%), rate the library as good (88%) or OK (86%) overall rather than bad (56%), and visit the smaller libraries.

There are also differences in the ethnic make-up of library users between individual libraries. The libraries with the highest proportion of black and ethnic minority children completing the survey are Colne Road library (86%), Nelson (81%), Brierfield (78%) and the Harris library (55%). This is a reflection of the demographic make-up of the area.

6.3 Children's visiting trends

The children were also asked a number of questions that will show their visiting trends. These questions gathered information on how often they visited, who they came with, if they have their own library card and why they came.

6.3.1 How often they visit the library

Most of the children visiting the library had been before; only 6% were visiting for the first time. Two-fifths of children come to the library less than once a week, a third come once a week, and one in six come more than once a week.

Chart 5 - *How often I visit this library*

I come here more than once a week	17%
I come here once a week	35%
I come here less than once a week	42%
This is my first time here	6%
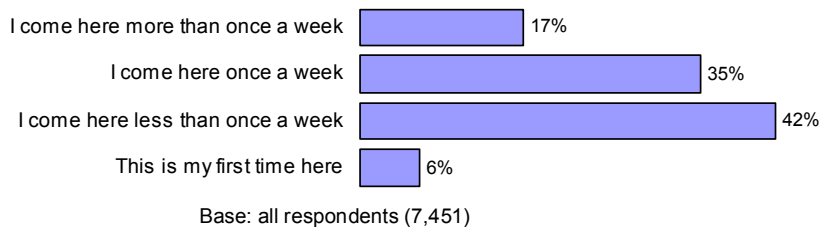
Base: all respondents (7,451)

White and younger children visit the library less frequently, and the under-fives are more likely than the other age groups to be visiting for the first time.

Carnforth (17%) and Ingol (16%) have significantly more children who are first time visitors, compared to all libraries. The libraries who have significantly more children that come more than once a week, compared to across all libraries, are Ribbleton (37%), Savick (35%), Nelson (32%), Great Harwood (31%) and Barnoldswick (30%).

6.3.2 Who they visit the library with

Three-fifths of children who visited the library came with their mum or dad, one-fifth came with their brother or sister and 14% came with friends. It is interesting to note that 4% of children came with their teacher on regular class visits to the library.

Chart 6 -   *Who I came with*

Today I came here with my mum or dad	59%
Today I came here with my brother or sister	19%
Today I came here with friends	14%
Today I came here on my own	12%
Grandparent	6%
Teacher	4%
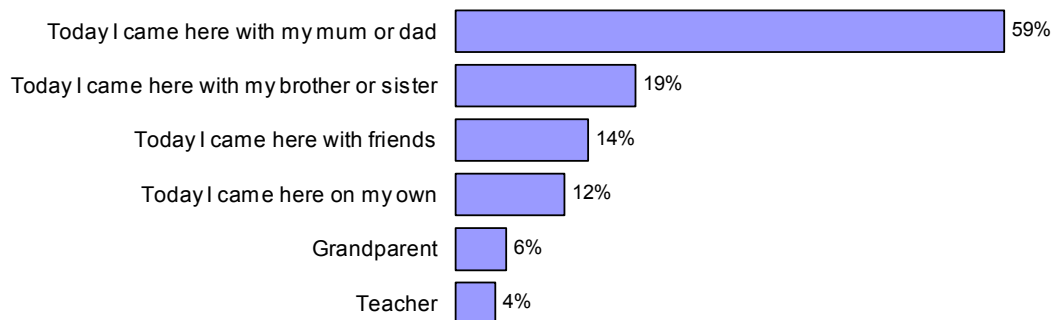
Base: all respondents (7,454)

The under-fives, are more likely to be accompanied by an adult when they visit the library (eg with their parents, grandparents, aunt, uncle, or their carer or nursery) than the children aged five or over. Five to ten year olds are the most likely age group to visit with their teacher (8%), but overall are still most likely to visit with their parents (64%). As children get older their visiting habits change. Children aged over ten are as likely to visit with friends (30%), or come on their own (29%) as visit with their parents (28%).

Children who visit less often are more likely to come with a member of their family (parent or grandparent) whereas children who visit more often are more likely to visit with their brother or sister, friends, on their own or with their teacher.

Boys are more likely than girls to come on their own, with their parents, carer or nursery. Girls however are more likely to come with friends or their grandparents.

White children are more likely to be accompanied by an adult (parent, grandparent, teacher, carer or nursery). Non-white children are more likely to come on their own or with someone of their own age (sibling or friends). This is likely to be because non-white children are on average two years older than the white children who responded to the questionnaire.

When children rate the library as good overall they are more likely to have come with an adult (parent or grandparent). Children who have come with friends are more likely to rate it is okay or bad overall. (This may be an effect due to the presence of peers).

The smallest libraries are more likely to have children visiting by themselves or with a teacher. This could be because they are more local to where they are living or going to school. The Harris library is more likely to have children visiting with their brother or sister than the smaller libraries.

6.3.3 If they have their own library card

The vast majority of children have their own library card. Perhaps unsurprisingly older children are more likely to have their own library card and children who visit the library less frequently are less likely to have their own library card.

Chart 7 - *I have my own library card for this library*

Yes	87%
No	13%
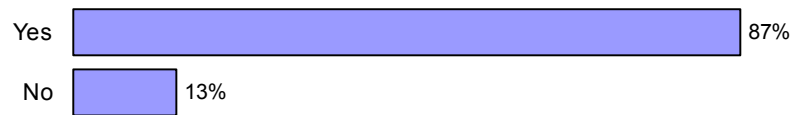
Base: all respondents (7,216)

6.3.4 Why they came to the library

Two-thirds of the children who came to the library came to borrow a book, followed by a third coming to return something and a fifth coming to use the internet or a computer.

Chart 8 - *What I will do in the library today*

I came to borrow a book	66%
I came to return something	37%
I came to use the internet or computer	19%
I came to read	18%
I came to look around	12%
I came to borrow videos or DVDs	11%
I came to find something out	11%
I came to do my homework	10%
I came to play	7%
I came to join the library	6%
I came for a storytime or event	5%
I came for somewhere to go	5%
I came to meet friends	4%
I came to borrow story tapes or CDs	4%
I came to borrow music CDs	2%

Base: all respondents (7,389)

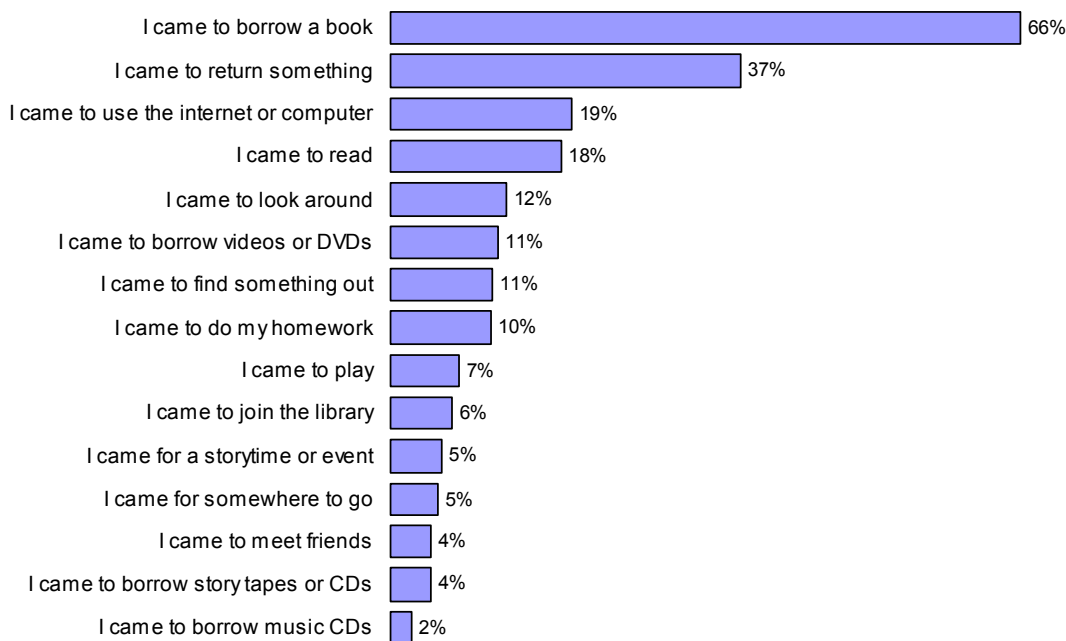Of those children who said they came to join the library they were more likely to be between five and ten, boys, and come from a non-white ethnic background. They are also more likely to rate the library as good (92%).

The under-fives are more likely to come to play or attend a story-time or event. The under-tens are more likely to come to borrow a book, return something, read, look around or borrow a story tape. The over-fives are more likely to come to borrow music CDs or find something out. As children start high school (11 to 15) they use the computer or internet more (45%) and come to do homework (26%), and are less likely than other ages to come to borrow a book (45%).

When children come to borrow books, they are more likely to visit less than once a week. Children who come more regularly are more likely to come to use the computer or internet, to read, to borrow videos or DVDs, find something out, do homework, play, attend a story-time or event, somewhere to go, meet friends, or borrow story-tapes or music compared to the children who come less regularly. Borrowing a book is still the most popular reason given for them coming to the library (64%) though.

Boys are more likely than girls to come to use the computer facilities. Girls use the library more for borrowing books, returning something, reading, and doing their homework.

When children come to borrow a book they are more likely to rate the library overall as good. This is good because most children do come to borrow a book. But when children come to attend a story time or event, for somewhere to go, to meet friends, borrow story tapes or CDs, or borrow music they are more likely to say the library is bad overall.

The Harris library is more likely than many of the other libraries to have children visiting to use the internet or computer, read or do their homework. The level four libraries are more likely than all the other libraries (except level 2) to have children coming to attend a story time or event. The level seven and mobile libraries are more likely to have children saying they came to borrow a book than all the other libraries. This may be because they do not have some of the other facilities.

6.4   Perceptions of libraries

The children were asked a series of questions on what they thought of particular aspects of the library they visited. The results for these questions can be found in chart ten below.

All of the aspects of the library service were thought of positively (being rated good or okay). It is interesting to note that the most highly rated characteristic was overall perceptions of the library service (88% rated it as good). This suggests that even though some of the attributes of the library services are rated less highly, overall perceptions aren't affected, especially as the overall perceptions were asked for last in this series of questions. The other most positively rated characteristics were the library staff (88%, good), books (83%, good) and the computers (80%, good). The aspects that the most people thought were bad are the story tapes (8%, bad), story times or events (7%, bad) and opening times (7%, bad).

Chart 9 -   *Children's perceptions of library services*

	Good	OK	Bad
Library overall	88%	11%	1%
Library staff	88%	11%	1%
Books	83%	16%	1%
Computers	80%	18%	2%
Look of library	75%	23%	2%
Help from staff with books	75%	22%	3%
Homework information	69%	27%	4%
Videos / DVDs	68%	29%	3%
Help from staff with homework	63%	33%	4%
Space to work	63%	31%	6%
Opening times	58%	36%	7%
Storytimes / events	55%	38%	7%
Story tapes	45%	47%	8%
Music CDs	43%	51%	6%

Good ☐ OK ☐ Bad
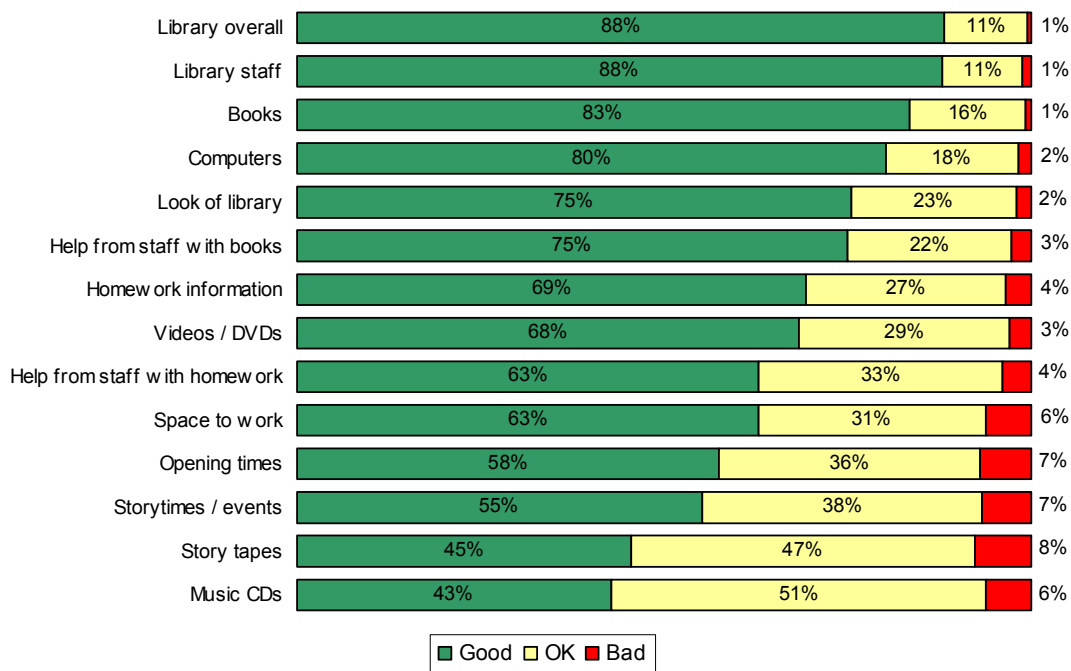
Base: all respondents (4,175 to 7,274)

Looking in more detail at perceptions of the library overall there are a number of significant differences between children's ratings. The older children, non-white children[*] and those children who visit the smallest libraries (level 7) are slightly less likely to rate the library as good overall.

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[*] This is because BME respondents are older, on average

The ratings of the library overall and the perceptions of each of the aspects of the library service match because the lower the children rate the library overall, the worse they tend to rate each of the service aspects. The most strongly correlated are story times, opening times, story tapes, music CDs and getting help from staff with homework.

Looking at each of the attributes of the library service some key differences in perceptions stand out.

Library staff

Older children aged 11 to 15 are less likely to rate the library staff as good, (81%). The more frequently children use the library, their perceptions of the quality of staff falls slightly. Almost nine in ten children rated the staff as good however (88%), with only 1% saying they were bad.

Books

Older children (72%), boys (82%) and non-white children (78%) are less likely to rate the books as good compared to the overall average (83%).

Computers

Four in five library users rate the computers as good (80%). There are only small differences by sub-group.

Look of library

The older children are more critical of their surroundings; only 67% of 11 to 15 year olds rate the look of the library as good, compared to 76% overall. The smaller libraries (level 7 with 63% rating as looking good) also fair less well against the level two to six libraries.

Help from staff with choosing books

The oldest children (11 to 15) are less likely to think the help they get from staff for choosing books is good (67% compared with 75% overall and 89% of under 5 year olds). The older children might need more help from staff as they are more likely to come without an adult. Also the staff on mobile libraries are not rated as highly as those in the medium to small libraries (level 3 to 7) for giving help in choosing books (62% compared with 75% overall). This could be due to the actual help from staff, or due to limited stock (however mobile libraries did not receive a significantly lower score for books).

Homework information

Children who use the library less than once a week have slightly less positive views on the information to help with their homework (67% good for those who use the library less than weekly compared with 71% for those who use it weekly or more). Children who visit less frequently may not know where to find it, so the information could be there but it may not be used.

Videos or DVDs

In common with many other of the service attributes the older children rate the videos and DVDs less well (59% for 11 to 15 year olds compared to 68% good overall). Girls (66%) and visitors to the smallest libraries (levels 6 and 7, 65% and 54% respectively) also rate this significantly lower than average. The smallest libraries may not have as large a range of videos as some of the larger libraries, or they may not have this service at all.

Help from staff with homework

The older children (11-15 age group) are less likely to think the help they get from staff with homework is good (56% compared with 63% overall). These children are more likely to need help because they are more likely to be visiting without an adult. The skill level of staff to deal with queries may need further exploration, for example by focus groups of staff. It may be that staff are asked for help they cannot or should not provide.

Space to work

Understandably the smallest libraries (level 7) and mobile libraries will have less room inside them. This could mean that there aren't the facilities to provide tables and chairs for children to use to work. This may well be the cause of these libraries having poorer ratings (children at the smallest libraries are more likely to say the space to work is okay, 41% or bad, 21%) than all of the larger libraries for space to work.

The older children may also have more need for space to work because of homework. As older children are less happy with the space to work (57% good) it may be a contributing factor.

Opening times

The older children rate the opening times less well, especially the 11 to 15s (45% compared with 58% overall), possibly because they would like to visit after school but many of the libraries will close not long after they arrive.

Again the smaller libraries do less well, particularly the level 7 libraries (42%), most likely to be because their opening times are more restricted.

Story times or events

The under-fives are the age group that are the most positive about the story times or events, being significantly more likely to rate them as good (87% compared with 55% overall). This could be because they are aimed more at them with the choice of stories and times. The older the child gets the more their ratings drop. The boys are more likely than the girls to rate them as bad. And non-white children also rate them less highly.

The rating of events was lower from children at mobile libraries. This could be due to fewer events being held at them, or people being more cramped when they are held.

Also as only some children will use this service, it would be useful to have had a 'don't know' option within the question rather than force the respondents into an opinion. This is also true of other services, which only a minority of visitors used.

Story tapes

Again the older children rate the story tapes less highly (31% as good compared to 45% overall). This could be because they are less appropriate for the older children.

Music CDs

The older the child the more their rating of the music CDs is likely to drop, the oldest children (11-15 age group) are significantly less likely to rate them as good (36% compared to 43% overall). One might expect the older children to listen to more music CDs, and therefore want a better selection. This may affect their view on how good the music CDs are. Also, non-white children are more likely to rate the music as bad.

6.5 Outcomes of their visit to the library

Four questions were asked based around the outcomes of the child's visit to the library.

6.5.1 I found something out in the library today

There were more children who said they didn't find something out in the library today (54%).

Chart 10 - *I found something out in the library today*
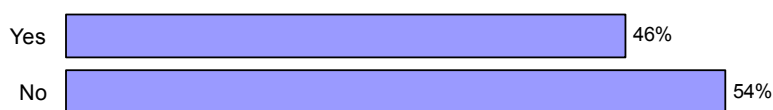
Base: all respondents (6,790)

The under-fives are more likely to say they didn't find anything out than the two older age groups. These were the age group that were less likely to come to find something out, maybe because they are not at school and so don't have homework. White children, those that visit less than once a week and those who use the mobile libraries are also more likely to say they didn't find anything out.

This question is not necessarily related to the success of the library however, since the indefinite nature of the question means what the person found out could be positive or negative. It would be worth suggesting that the question is changed next time to a more precise wording.

6.5.2 I used the internet or computers in the library today

Nearly four-fifths of respondents said they didn't use the internet or computers in the library today. As only 19% said that they came to use the computer it is good that more people were actually able to use them indicating there is enough capacity (though perhaps more children would come to use them if there were more available).

Chart 11 -   *I used the internet or computers in the library today*

|	
Yes	22%
No	78%

Base: all respondents (6,810)

The 11 to 15 year-olds are more likely to have used the computer during their visit (49%). Girls, white children and those that visit less than weekly are more likely not to have used the computer or internet. When children don't use the computers they are more likely to rate the library as good overall rather than okay.

The Harris library has significantly more children saying that they used the computer or internet than any of the other levels of libraries. Nearly all of the children who used the mobile library said they didn't use the computer.

6.5.3 At the end of my visit today I took books home

Two-thirds of respondents took books home at the end of their visit. So of the 66% who came to borrow books it seems most of the children got what they came to the library for. Over nine in ten (92%) of those who said they came to borrow a book took one home. Also one in five (19%) of those who did not say they came to borrow a book did so in the end.

Chart 12 -   *At the end of my visit today I took books home*

Yes	67%
No	33%
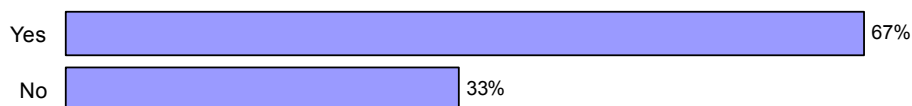
Base: all respondents (7,116)

The 11 to 15 year olds were less likely to say they took books home. This fits with the reasons they gave for coming to the library (use computer, do homework and meet friends). Boys, non-white children and those who visit weekly or more frequently are less likely to take books home. This suggests they come for other things such as using the computers or reading.

When children don't borrow books they are more likely to think the library overall is bad. The children who visit smallest (level 7) and mobile libraries are more likely to take books home.

6.5.4   At the end of my visit today I took cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos home

Only 15% of children said that they took any cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos home. This is less than the 18% of children who came to borrow videos or DVDs, story tapes or CDs, or music CDs. This shows that not everyone was able to get what they came for.

Chart 13 -   *At the end of my visit today I took cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos home*

Yes 15%

No 85%

Base: all respondents (6,816)

The children who are more likely to borrow cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos are those under-five, boys, white and who visit weekly or more. As the smaller and mobile libraries are less likely to stock these items it isn't surprising that the children who use those libraries are less likely to say they took these items home.

6.6 Suggestions for improvements

The final question asked for the children's ideas for how to improve libraries. The question was open for the children to give spontaneous answers, and grouped, the top five responses were:

- to have newer/more computers, be allowed to use them for longer, have two seats and internet browser access (581 responses, 21%)
- to open longer and be open at weekends (402 responses, 15%);
- to have more and newer books, stock complete series, and have more interesting books (389 responses, 14%);
- to have more and cheaper electronic media eg CD, DVD, talking books (315 responses, 11%); and
- that it is good as it is (219 responses, 8%).

For a full list of suggestions made, see the marked up questionnaire in appendix 1.

There are some significant differences between people's suggestions based on different factors.

The older age group (11-15) were more likely to suggest improvements to the computer facilities (33%) and opening hours (18%). The 5-10 age group were most likely to want more and newer books and to stock complete series of books (19%). The under-5s, (or their parents), were less concerned with books, and were most likely to suggest having toilets and a baby-change area (20%) or story-telling events (14%).

When children come to the library at least once a week they are more likely to want improvements to the computer facilities (26%) and opening hours (17%). Children from an ethnic minority were especially likely to suggest improving the computer facilities (37%).

The individual suggestions that were made have been further grouped into broad themes to show which areas people have made the most suggestions about. This suggests that the facilities, electronic media and books are the areas that need concentrating on the most in terms of improvements. The results are in the chart below.

Chart 14 - *Suggestions for improvements*

Facilities 27%
Electronic media 26%
Books 19%
Opening hours & promotion 11%
Activities 10%
Good as it is 6%
Staffing 2%
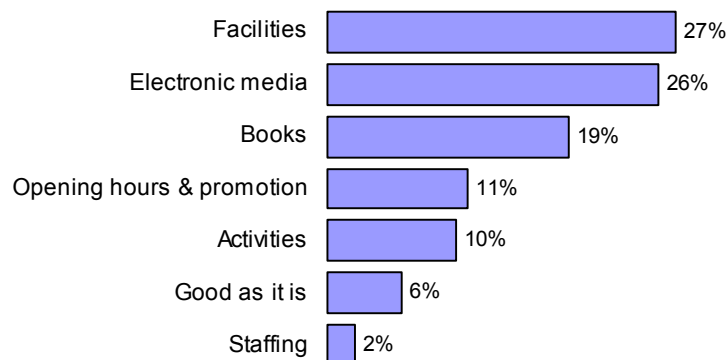
Base: all respondents giving a suggestion (3,828)

To give an idea of the things that the children most thought would make the library better for them the top answers for each category are.

- *Facilities* – to have toilets, more space and seating, and have a quiet area for doing homework with tables and chairs.
- *Electronic media* – improvements to the computer facilities (more and newer computers, longer time on the computers, and more space) and more and cheaper electronic media (eg CDs, DVDs and talking books).
- *Books* – to stock more books that are newer, to have complete series, more educational books, and more teenage books.
- *Opening hours* – to be open longer and at the weekend.
- *Activities* – to have more activities such as reading, homework and holiday clubs, competitions, story-telling events, and to have more and newer educational toys, craft items and worksheets.
- *Staffing* – to have more staff that are nicer to children and will give help with homework.

7 Conclusions

A questionnaire for finding out young people's views on libraries was sent to 96 libraries across the county. In total 7,567 questionnaires were returned from 96 libraries over a seven day period.

The children completing the survey had an average age of just over seven years, though the highest number of replies came from ten year olds. Older children were less likely to reply though they were individually more likely to use the library more often. More girls filled in the questionnaire (57%) than boys (43%). This could either be because there are more girls that use the libraries in general or it could be because girls were more likely to fill in a questionnaire.

One in six of the children replying visit the library more than once a week, about a third visit once a week and about half either visit less than once a week, or this is their first visit. They are most likely to visit with a parent (59%), though those aged over ten are as likely to visit with friends (30%), or come on their own (29%) as visit with their parents (28%).

Two-thirds of the children who came to the library came to borrow a book, and the same proportion said they did so. A fifth came to use the internet or a computer and again the same proportion did so. Children aged over ten are equally likely to have come to use the computer facilities as borrow a book (both 45%). Children visiting level seven and mobile libraries are more likely to come to borrow a book, perhaps due to a lack of other facilities.

Almost nine in ten children rated the library overall as good. Only 1% thought it was bad. The same proportion thought that library staff were good (88%). Four in five thought the computing facilities were good (80%). However, there is less satisfaction with opening times (58% rated it as good).

The final question on the survey asked for spontaneous responses on what would improve the library. The top responses were to improve computer facilities and increase opening hours.

8 Recommendations

Satisfaction with the library service amongst child users appears to be strong, especially overall and with staff service. The recommendations from the research are outlined below.

- Publicise these positive results amongst library staff, certainly those of nine in ten children rating the overall service as good, and nine in ten rating the staff as good.

- Encourage more help from staff to children, especially in mobile libraries.

- Consider adding toilets and baby-change facilities to libraries.

- Try to add newer stocks of books, music and DVDs.

- Perform the survey again in 3 years, to enable performance to be compared, and the success of any initiatives to be evaluated.

- Suggest changes to the wording of the questions, with a 'don't know' answer added for the satisfaction questions not at all children will use (eg storytimes).

- Also suggest the removal or rewriting of the question "I found out something today".

- Consider investigating the reasons why older children visit the library less and are less satisfied. And why those older children that do still come to the library visit more frequently. For example by focus groups of users and non-users.

- Conduct further analysis on the survey data. The postcode of the child was recorded, and this means the distance travelled can be calculated for each child.

9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1: Marked Up Questionnaire

All values are given in percentages
Base: All Respondents (7,567) unless otherwise stated

	Survey day	
	Monday	24%
	Tuesday	18%
	Wednesday	8%
	Thursday	15%
	Friday	15%
	Saturday	20%
	Sunday	0%

Base: all respondents (7,410)

	Library	
		Count
	Chorley	262
	Harris Library	239
	Morecambe	219
	Lancaster	201
	Colne	200
	Nelson	198
	Burnley	181
	Longridge	175
	Skelmersdale	173
	Clitheroe	165
	Poulton	163
	Accrington	162
	Clayton Green	157
	Fulwood	155
	Longton	150
	Ormskirk	143
	Leyland	137
	Kingsfold	137
	Fleetwood	123
	Garstang	123
	Haslingden	122
	Great Harwood	118
	Barnoldswick	116
	Trawden	109
	Thornton	108
	Lostock Hall	105
	Knott End	105
	Tarleton	103
	Rawtenstall	101
	Savick	100
	Coppull	100
	Ingol	96

	Kirkham	94
	Ribbleton	92
	Whalley	91
	Adlington	86
	Padiham	83
	Euxton	81
	Penwortham	80
	Parbold	79
	Carnforth	76
	St. Annes	73
	Cleveleys	72
	Chatsworth	71
	Eccleston	69
	Ansdell	67
	Lytham	67
	Sharoe Green	67
	Colne Road	63
	Whitworth	63
	Clayton-Le-Moors	60
	Warton(La)	60
	Heysham	55
	Oswaldtwistle	54
	Preston Mobile	50
	Coal Clough	49
	Rishton	49
	Bamber Bridge	47
	Silverdale	47
	Chatburn	47
	Bacup	44
	Bolton-Le-Sands	44
	Upholland	42
	Barrowford	41
	West Lancs Trailer	40
	Burscough	39
	Brierfield	38
	Eaves Lane	38
	Lancaster Mobile 2	38
	Freckleton	37
	Church	37
	Rosegrove	36
	Mellor	36
	Read	31
	Halton	30
	Garstang Mobile 1	30
	Rossendale Trailer	30
	Caton	29
	Chorley Mobile	29
	Warton(Fy)	28
	Ightenhill	26
	Crawshawbooth	26
	Barbon Street	23
	Earby	21
	Wheatley Lane	19
	Waterfoot	18
	Ribble Valley Mobile	15

Briercliffe	13
Brunshaw	13
Hest Bank	12
Pike Hill	11
Rossendale Mobile	4
Garstang Mobile 2	3
West Lancs Mobile 1	3
Pendle Mobile	3
West Lancs Mobile 2	1

Q1	**What I am**	
	I am a boy	43%
	I am a girl	57%

Base: all respondents (7,481)

Q2	**What was your age on your last birthday?**	
	Under 1	3%
	1	5%
	2	7%
	3	8%
	4	5%
	5	6%
	6	6%
	7	8%
	8	8%
	9	9%
	10	10%
	11	8%
	12	7%
	13	5%
	14	4%
	15	2%

Base: all respondents (7,461)

Q4	**How often I visit this library**	
	This is my first time here	6%
	I come here more than once a week	17%
	I come here once a week	35%
	I come here less than once a week	42%

Base: all respondents (7,451)

Q5	Who I came with	
	Today I came here with my mum or dad	59%
	Today I came here with my brother or sister	19%
	Today I came here with friends	14%
	Today I came here on my own	12%
	Grandparent	6%
	Teacher	4%
	Nanny, carer, nursery	2%
	Auntie, uncle	1%
	Today I came here with someone else	1%
	Learning mentor	0%
	Neighbour, friends parent	0%
	Carer, guardian	0%
	Deaf society	0%

Base: all respondents (7,454)

Q6	I have my own library card for this library	
	Yes	87%
	No	13%

Base: all respondents (7,216)

Q7	**What I will do in the library today**	
	I came to borrow a book	66%
	I came to return something	37%
	I came to use the internet or computer	19%
	I came to read	18%
	I came to look around	12%
	I came to borrow videos or DVDs	11%
	I came to find something out	11%
	I came to do my homework	10%
	I came to play	7%
	I came to join the library	6%
	I came for a storytime or event	5%
	I came for somewhere to go	5%
	I came to meet friends	4%
	I came to borrow story tapes or CDs	4%
	I came to borrow music CDs	2%
	I came for something else	1%
	Reading voyage, reading club	1%
	Came with mum, dad, grandparent, sibling	1%
	Renew books	0%
	Rhythm, rhyme and bounce	0%
	Meet mum, sister, brother	0%
	Regular class visit	0%
	Colouring or crafts	0%
	Join a club or take part in a club	0%
	Help a friend find a book	0%
	See if book has arrived or order book	0%
	Put a book on my club record, collect a certificate	0%
	Photocopy or fax something	0%
	Check or attend activities	0%
	Hand in review sheet	0%
	Sign a sheet, change address, get new card	0%
	Buy a book, magazine or charts	0%
	Get photo taken	0%
	Avoid the rain, someone or be by myself	0%
	Hand in lost library card	0%
	Borrow a computer disk or game	0%
	Meet new friends	0%
	Learn	0%
	Cultural diversity event	0%
	Treat for being good, trip out	0%
	Interview for work experience	0%
	Relax	0%
	Use the toilet	0%
	Creative writing	0%
	Mum made me	0%
	Meeting	0%
	Hand photos in	0%
	Look at picture books	0%
	Get a bus pass with relative	0%

Base: all respondents (7,389)

Q8	**What I think of this library**			
		Good	**OK**	**Bad**
	I think the books are	83%	16%	1%
	I think the music CDs are	43%	51%	6%
	I think the story tapes or CDs are	45%	47%	8%
	I think the videos or DVDs are	68%	29%	3%
	I think the computers are	80%	18%	2%
	I think the information to help with my homework is	69%	27%	4%
	I think the space for me to sit and work is	63%	31%	6%
	I think the storytimes or events are	55%	38%	7%
	I think the library looks	75%	23%	2%
	I think the library opening times are	58%	36%	7%
	I think the library staff are	88%	11%	1%
	I think the help I get from the library staff with my homework is	63%	33%	4%
	I think the help I get from the library staff choosing books is	75%	22%	3%
	Overall I think the library is	88%	11%	1%

Q9	**I found something out in the library today**	
	Yes	46%
	No	54%

Base: all respondents (6,790)

Q10	**I used the internet or computers in the library today**	
	Yes	22%
	No	78%

Base: all respondents (6,810)

Q11	**At the end of my visit today I took books home**	
	Yes	67%
	No	33%

Base: all respondents (7,116)

Q12	**At the end of my visit today I took cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos home**	
	Yes	15%
	No	85%

Base: all respondents (6,816)

Q13	**Ethnicity**	
	White	87%
	Asian	8%
	Mixed	4%
	Black	1%
	Other	0%

Base: all respondents (7,228)

Q14	**Please write down any ideas you have that would make the library better for you.**	
		Count
	Newer/more computers, longer time, two seats, browser access	586
	Open longer and at weekends	402
	More/newer books, stock complete series, more interesting	389
	More and cheaper electronic media eg CD, DVD, talking books	315
	Good as it is	219
	Need toilets, baby change area, step for using toilets	200
	More activities (reading/homework/holiday club/competitions)	181
	More colourful, pictures, more displays, show childrens work	175
	More space, separate childrens area	170
	More seating eg comfy chairs, beanbags, smaller	170
	Quiet homework area, more tables and chairs, separate area	152
	More educational books, magazines, up to date	130
	Better shelves eg colour/age code, alphabetical, lower	88
	More books for teenagers, teenagers area or club	85
	Refreshments or able to eat in library	80
	Story telling events, different days/after school/publicise	76
	More and newer educational toys, craft items, worksheets	74
	More/nicer staff, manage children better, help with homework	72
	TV, video, games, music area, listen to story tapes	55
	More activities for under 5s, books for younger children	46
	Keep it tidy, new furnishings, stop vandalism	26
	Soft play area, cordoned off, creche	20
	Colour photocopying and printing, cheaper	15
	Request board for books, recommended book list	11
	More leaflets in library and door drops, posters around town	10
	Better parking, bike rack	9
	Have clear rules, make people quiet	7
	Better access for prams, wheelchairs eg automatic doors	7
	Better lighting, blinds on windows	7
	Able to buy books, blank CDs, stationery, magazines	7
	Have somewhere where you can talk	6
	More smile computers	6
	Offer work experience	5
	Free and faster book ordering	4
	Better resources on mobile library, promote it, more visits	4
	Less fines, longer borrowing period for DVDs, CDs	3
	Keep the library open	3
	Online or computer to check stock on	3
	More access to adult books	3
	Borrow musical instruments	2
	Quick drop box for returning books, CDs, DVDs	2
	Have a suggestion box	1
	An outside reading area	1
	Enough prizes for everyone on reading voyage	1

9.2 Appendix 2: Children's PLUS Form

Library and Information Service

Children's Survey

Lancashire
County Council
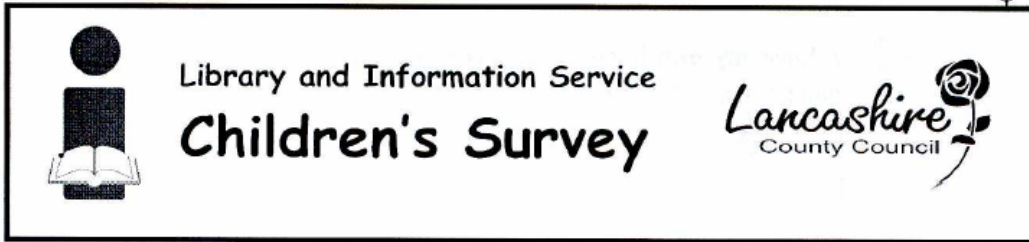
If you need help with this form please ask a member of staff
Please do not write your name on this form.

1 What I am
please mark ☒ in one box

☐ I am a boy

☐ I am a girl

2 What was your age on your last birthday?

☐ years

Example

9 years

Please mark ☒ here ☐ if aged under 1

3 My postcode is

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

example

| M | K | 4 | 2 | | 9 | W | A |

If you don't know your postcode please write down your home address:

4 How often I visit this library
please mark ☒ in one box

☐ This is my first time here

☐ I come here more than once a week

☐ I come here once a week

☐ I come here less than once a week

5 Who I came with
please mark ☒ in as many boxes as you like

☐ Today I came here with my mum or dad

☐ Today I came here with my brother or sister

☐ Today I came here with friends

☐ Today I came here on my own

☐ Today I came here with someone else, please say who:

LAREF | LOC | REF | DAY | R
E 2 3 2 1

6 **I have my own library card for this library**
please mark ⊠ in one box

☐ Yes

☐ No

7 **What I will do in the library today**
please mark ⊠ in as many boxes as you like

☐ I came to join the library

☐ I came to borrow a book

☐ I came to find something out

☐ I came to borrow music CDs

☐ I came to borrow story tapes or CDs

☐ I came to borrow videos or DVDs

☐ I came to return something

☐ I came to read

☐ I came to do my homework

☐ I came to use the internet or computer

☐ I came for a storytime or event

☐ I came to look around

☐ I came to meet friends

☐ I came to play

☐ I came for somewhere to go

☐ I came for something else, please say what:

8 What I think of this library
please mark ⊠ in only one box on each line

	GOOD	OK	BAD
I think the books are	☐	☐	☐
I think the music CDs are	☐	☐	☐
I think the story tapes or CDs are	☐	☐	☐
I think the videos or DVDs are	☐	☐	☐
I think the computers are	☐	☐	☐
I think the information to help with my homework is	☐	☐	☐
I think the space for me to sit and work is	☐	☐	☐
I think the storytimes or events are	☐	☐	☐
I think the library looks	☐	☐	☐
I think the library opening times are	☐	☐	☐
I think the library staff are	☐	☐	☐
I think the help I get from the library staff with my homework is	☐	☐	☐
I think the help I get from the library staff choosing books is	☐	☐	☐

	GOOD	OK	BAD
Overall I think this library is	☐	☐	☐

9 I found something out in the library today
please mark ⊠ in one box

☐ Yes

☐ No

10 I used the internet or computers in the library today
please mark ⊠ in one box

☐ Yes

☐ No

11 At the end of my visit today I took books home
please mark ⊠ in one box

☐ Yes

☐ No

12 At the end of my visit today I took cassettes, CDs, DVDs or videos home
please mark ⊠ in one box

☐ Yes

☐ No

Please (circle) the word that describes you best:
(choose just ONE of these)

Asian   Mixed   Black   White

Other   Please give more details

Please (circle) the words which describe you best:
(choose as many as you need to describe yourself)

British   Indian   Irish   African

Caribbean   Pakistani   Bangladeshi   Chinese

Other   Please give more details

PLEASE WRITE DOWN ANY IDEAS YOU HAVE THAT WOULD MAKE THE LIBRARY BETTER FOR YOU

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

9.3   Appendix 3: Tables of results