



department for  
**culture, media  
and sport**

# Public Library Service Standards

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improving  
the quality  
of life for all

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

# Introduction

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In 2001 the Government launched the Public Library Standards. The aim of the Standards was to help create a clear and widely accepted definition of a Library Authority's statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient service", and set for the first time a performance monitoring framework for public libraries. Since then there has been a significant increase in library opening hours, improvements to stock and ICT provision, an increase in user satisfaction and visits.

The Standards were revised for the first time in 2004 following publication of Framework for the Future to make sure that they reflected the new strategy and did not impose an unreasonable administrative burden on local authorities to deliver quality services to meet local needs. The service standards are a suite of targets that measure performance across core activities. They should be considered alongside the library "impact measures".

The Service Standards were revised for the second time in 2006. We appreciate the efforts made by all authorities to achieve the Standards and would particularly commend those authorities that have already met them. Authorities report their position against the service standards in their annual statistical return to CIPFA.

Some of the original Standards we have dropped or amended, but Authorities should continue, if they think it is worthwhile, to collect and monitor them for their own internal management purposes.

This new package of Standards should demonstrate how libraries are meeting the needs of their local communities. We believe that the Standards are reasonable and reflect the minimum standard of service that local people are entitled to expect. However, in the context of the increasing range of delivery methods open to library services, and in line with the principle of local discretion, we recognise that authorities are best placed to judge the precise needs of the communities they serve. We have therefore introduced a greater degree of flexibility into the way that some of the Standards may be met. We also acknowledge that when looking at authorities' performance against them, there may be room for qualification about why your own authority may differ against certain of the Standards. Clearly though, we would not expect any authority to claim special consideration in missing more than a small number of them.

Most of all, we want authorities to be able to use the Standards for a variety of assessments whether that is an external peer review or as a self assessment tool to encourage the continuation of the welcome improvement we have seen in recent years.

**PLSS1- Proportion of households living within specified distance of a static library**

Authority Type	% Household within		
	1 mile	2 miles	Sparse authorities
			2 miles
Inner London	100		
Outer London	99		
Metropolitan	95	100	
Unitary	88	100	72
County		85	72

**Sparse authorities defined as the 10% of authorities with highest sparsity of population indices. Source: Ward Sparsity 2001 census indicator.**

(see <http://www.libplans.ws/resources/links/default.asp>)

***Use of mobiles and other service outlets***

Mobile/other provision does not contribute towards attainment of this standard (this is under review as part of the latest review of the standards). However, authorities may wish to report their use of mobiles and other service outlets for the following reasons:

Contextual information:

Reporting the employment of mobile libraries and other service outlets allows DCMS/MLA to gain a more rounded view of provision by authorities. This is particularly helpful where an authority is not meeting PLSS1.

Best Value Performance Indicators

The BV220 scoring allows local authorities not meeting this standard to report on their use of mobiles and other service outlets to demonstrate, in a calculable way, how they serve the remainder of their community. Authorities wishing to be assessed on mobile/"other" provision in this way are requested to provide us with the proportion of households living within a specified distance of any of their service points. Guidance on the BV220 scoring can be found at:

<http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1136118>

### ***Definition of how this is to be calculated***

The number of households within a quarter of a mile of each scheduled library stop and one mile of an “other service outlet”, for all authority types, should be identified, and the proportion of households living within the specified distances of a static library; mobile library or other service outlet, reported upon. For a mobile library stop to count the mobile would need to visit for at least 10 minutes, at least every 3 weeks.

### ***Definition of “other service outlet”***

Spaces which **allow access by the general public** and, as a minimum, provide a staffed Information point, stock loan facilities and a public access terminal linked to the Internet.

Nb. Organisations for a limited number of people or a closed community (eg homes for the elderly) would not qualify.

All types of service outlet, including mobile stops, are to be calculated on the basis of the library postcodes returned in the CIPFA Actuals Survey (we will ask for mobile stops in future years), and will include static service points open less than 10 hours per week. The distance measures are irrespective of whether the nearest service point is within or outside the administrative area of the local authority.

### **PLSS 2 - Aggregate scheduled opening hours per 1,000 population for all libraries**

#### **128 hours**

This is to be based on scheduled opening hours. ‘Population’ is the resident population for that authority. London authorities may use a measure of ‘enhanced’ population, taking into account daily flows of commuters and visitors to the area. The figure is calculated each year by ODPM to inform Standard Spending Assessments. Calculate PLSS 2 by dividing the sum of individual service point opening hours for the year by the population. All service points – static, mobile and “other service points” as defined in PLSS1 will count towards this total. The opening hours of mobiles should only include the scheduled time they are at each stop, not travelling time etc., and other service points should only include the scheduled opening hours of the library service space.

Enhanced population is a measure of population served. It is a measure in calculating Standard Spending Assessments. The enhanced population equals the sum of:

1. Resident population;
2. Average day time net inflow multiplied by 0.25;
3. Count of annual overnight visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 365; and Count of annual day visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 3, divided by 365.

**PLSS 3 – Percentage of static libraries (as defined by CIPFA) providing access to electronic information resources connected to the Internet.**

**100%**

Percentage of static service points open more than 10 hours a week that have public access to the Internet.

**PLSS 4 – Total number of electronic workstations with access to the internet and the libraries catalogue (available for public use through both static and mobile libraries, and other service outlets (as defined in PLSS1)) available to users per 10,000 population.**

**6**

‘Electronic workstation’ means a computer terminal with access to the Internet and on-line catalogue.

**PLSS5 - Requests**

- i **Percentage of requests for books met within 7 days**
- ii **Percentage of requests for books met within 15 days**
- iii **Percentage of requests for books met within 30 days**

**Targets:**

**50% within 7 days**  
**70% within 15 days**  
**85% within 30 days**

Based on counting the period from when the reservation is made to the time when the borrower is informed that the book is available.

## **PLSS 6 - Number of library visits per 1,000 population Targets:**

**7,650 in Inner London Boroughs (or 6,800 enhanced population) 8,600 in Outer London Boroughs  
6,000 in Metropolitan Districts  
6,300 in Unitary Authorities  
6,600 in County Councils**

There has been concern about how to count visits to libraries given the move towards multi-service provision on one site. Framework for the Future welcomes facility sharing, this is a positive step which can help meet community needs, and increase and broaden the library user base. However, capturing trends in visits is difficult if counting practices change and if there is no consistency across the country. DCMS, the AC and CIPFA have therefore devised a new physical visits definition.

All visits to a library will count, where the library is not multi service centre or has no other council services integrated into the space occupied by the library.

Where a library has other council services integrated into the library space or where the library is part of a multi service centre, Authorities should count as a library visitor only those who use the library element of the overall provision.

Where there is joint provision, activities that would constitute a library visit include visits for the following purposes: to borrow materials; to use reference or other materials in the library; to use a computer terminal; to request or collect information from the enquiry point (operated or managed by the library service); to attend a learning session; to attend a reader development activity; to attend a meeting (when it is organised by or through the library service, and whether or not it occurs during the library's opening hours); to attend an exhibition, concert or other cultural or community event (when it is organised by or through the library service, and whether or not it occurs during the library's opening hours), or to use the space set aside for library functions for any other purpose.

### **Counting Methodology**

Ultimately, the method used to count visits is for authorities to determine although, for consistency and to improve the robustness of the data, DCMS advocates a full year count, if possible by electronic counters. Where this encompasses a multi-service point using electronic counters at a common entrance, some sampling will also be necessary to identify those visits that meet the definition above. Sampling for this purpose and for those authorities that cannot

undertake a full year count should be carried out in line with the latest advice on frequency in the CIPFA guidance for the Public Library Statistics Actuals return.

#### Multi-Service Outlets

DCMS recognizes the considerable efforts made by some authorities to position their libraries as community hubs, or to improve the popularity of their libraries, by co-locating them with other services. This aligns with the aspirations of “Framework for the Future”. Although the physical visits definition above reflects DCMS’ wish not lose the sharp statistical focus on the additional visits being generated by libraries widening range of activities, authorities should also report separately total visits to all their service points (including visits for non-library purposes to a multi-service space) This will not form part of the standards assessment but will inform the overall picture of usage.

#### “Virtual” Visits

Acknowledging the increasing use of our public libraries “virtually” or remotely”, DCMS had intended to include a standard for this type of user activity. However, continuing definitional, methodology and technical issues have made this impractical at this time. We envisage that the standards will evolve on a rolling basis to keep track of changing operational practices. We will return to the issue of recording virtual/remote access in time for the next refresh. In the meantime, to give the fullest indication of public library use, authorities should report the number of visits (as a total number) to a library website to be defined as:

A visit occurs when an external user connects to a networked library resource for any length of time or purpose (regardless of the number of pages or elements viewed). Examples of a networked library resource include a library OPAC or a library web page, including those pages created by the library service to support the community – e.g. Community online material. Include accesses from libraries’ own service point work stations. In the case of a user visit to a library web site a user who looks at 16 pages and 54 graphic images registers one visit to the web server.”



**PLSS 7 - % of library users 16 and over who view their library service as:**

- i very good
- ii good
- iii adequate
- iv poor
- v very poor

**Standard suggested – 94%** of respondents rate the library service as 'very good' or 'good'.

The aim of PLSS 7 and PLSS 8 is to give a top line indication of how users view the service. Authorities should continue to collect and monitor their performance against a variety of user satisfaction measures for their own internal management purposes and to reflect the consultation processes they have undertaken to inform any CPA, inspection or self-assessment frameworks.

**PLSS 8 - % of library users under 16 who view their library service as:**

- i good
- ii adequate
- iii bad

**Standard suggested – 87%** of respondents rate the library service as 'good'.

When we launched these Standards in 2004 we said that we would revise the target of 77% once a representative number of authorities had undertaken a Children's PLUS survey that included this overall satisfaction question. In common with the other Standards, the target is based on the upper quartile of performance.

In December 2007 the target for 2007/08 was increased to 90% based on the upper quartile of performance in a sample of authorities. However, evaluation of returns from all authorities showed the upper quartile of performance was actually lower than 90%. With effect from April 2007 the final revised target is 87%.

**PLSS 9 - Annual items added through purchase per 1,000 population.**

**216 additions per 1000 population**

These include 'Books' and 'Other items' which include audio-visual materials, electronic publications and other formats but excludes newspapers, periodicals and other materials. CIPFA guidance for the Public Library Statistics Actuals return provides definitions of these categories.

**PLSS 10 - Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available on loan.**

**6.7 years**

"Lending stock" means all books and other items available on open access or available for loan. Special collections, however, should be excluded.

The count is based on books for loan including extra copies in sets and Audio-Visual materials for loan. It excludes reference materials and books held in reserve. This translates into the number of years it would take to replenish lending stock of books and audio-visual materials.