

## SOCIAL OUTCOMES



## GLL working with The Royal Borough of Greenwich

### How a Co-operative Model has Transformed Greenwich's Libraries

**When Greenwich Council needed a more effective and sustainable way to run its library services in 2012, it extended an already successful partnership with workers co-operative GLL - a staff-owned charitable social enterprise that had been managing the borough's leisure centres since 1993.**

The impact on libraries was immediate and sustained. At the start of the partnership, Greenwich ranked 28th in London for items issued. Today, the borough sits 5th in London, with nearly two million library visits recorded each year, over one million items issued and more than 427,000 digital loans. Community engagement is high, with public PC usage among the highest in the capital, and an impressive 97% of users rating the service as good or excellent.

GLL's co-operative model has widened the Greenwich Libraries offer beyond the professionally delivered core library offer to include physical activity referral programmes, wellbeing initiatives, and community health provision - alongside books, reading and information services.

Greenwich Libraries have also become engines of local economic growth. Through Start Up Greenwich, delivered as part of the British Library's Business & IP Centre network, library spaces now provide mentoring, workshops, and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs. To date, nearly 600 members have been supported - demonstrating that a well-run library can be a

genuine driver of economic opportunity, not simply a place to borrow books. The Start Up offer from GLL libraries is also now being run in other councils.



Coffee morning at the co-located Thamesmere Library and Leisure Centre

GLL as an organisation has also grown over this time into the UK's largest provider of public leisure and library services - operating more than 250 leisure centres and 124 public and prison libraries across the country. Although a national operator, GLL is still a genuinely local organisation, with deep roots in the community it serves and is proud to be staff owned. GLL has proved, through our people actively shaping the business and organisation, that social purpose, customer focus, and enterprise can be achieved and create a scalable and sustainable business. GLL reinvests surpluses locally into facilities, programmes, and service improvements supporting literacy, wellbeing, and community engagement. It widens and deepens its social and economic impact through its Sport and Literary Foundations, supporting aspiring athletes and emerging authors across the UK.

Greenwich's journey offers a compelling case study for any council wrestling with how to protect library services under financial pressure. A co-operative model - one that aligns commercial discipline with genuine community purpose - can deliver more than most expect. If your authority is exploring sustainable library provision, GLL would welcome an initial conversation. Visit [www.gll.org/contact-us](http://www.gll.org/contact-us) to get in touch.

---

**For further information contact:  
Rebecca Gediking**

Library Services Director - GLL  
[rebecca.gediking@gll.org](mailto:rebecca.gediking@gll.org) | 0330 123 1500 | [gll.org](http://gll.org)



People-centred councils  
driving social innovation  
putting people first

E: [comms@councils.coop](mailto:comms@councils.coop) | X: [@CoopInnovation](https://twitter.com/CoopInnovation) | W: [councils.coop](http://councils.coop)