



Friends of Bristol Libraries Guidance Framework

This framework sets out how Friends Groups and Bristol Libraries work together to ensure communities benefit from high quality library services.

Friends Groups have played a vital role in the development of Bristol Libraries and the Library Service is keen to maintain a good working relationship with Friends Groups in the years ahead.

Friends Groups are open to any library member 18 years of age or older who wants to get involved and are a practical way to support your local library.

Friends Groups work in agreement with the Library Service to:

- Support and promote their local library and the services it offers. Help to raise money to benefit the library service and hold events and activities for people of all ages.
- Enhance their local library offers by providing practical and financial assistance.
- Represent and engage with their local community.

Friends Groups also play a key role in helping Bristol Library Service to fulfil its four key strategic priorities;

- Empower and Care
- Fair and Inclusive
- Well-connected
- Support Wellbeing

(See [Bristol Library Strategy](#) for complete Library Service Strategy)

Most libraries have an active Friends Group. Please ask your local Library Supervisor or Library Development Officer for details of how to get involved.

For the purposes of this document the term Library Supervisor will be used to describe the member of staff who has the responsibility for managing the building, staff and volunteers at that library.

The Role of Friends Groups

Friends Groups exist to support their local library and the wider Library Service. Each library will have individual priorities alongside those which are shared by all of Bristol's libraries. These priorities ensure that the library offers the best possible service to the local community.

Friends Groups will:



Provide assistance to, enhance, and support the library in agreement with the Library Supervisor

Library Supervisors and Library Development Officers are the main points of contact for Friends Groups. Good, collaborative, relationships with these staff members are key to having a successful group.

All libraries in Bristol benefit from the support of their communities. Friends Groups represent those communities and their members bring skills, time and energy which enhance the core library offer.

Friends Groups support specific activities and events for people of all ages such as author visits, the Summer Reading Challenge and other children's events. These may take place in the library or elsewhere in the community.

Friends Groups can decide the focus of their activities, but these activities should support the purposes and priorities of the library service (See the strategy linked above). Library Development Officers and Library Supervisors will work alongside Friends to give guidance and seek advice from Senior Managers if necessary.

Support and promote their local library and the services it offers

Libraries are greatly appreciated by many members of local communities, but many people are not aware of what a modern library service offers to them.

Friends Groups are actively involved with promoting their local library and inspiring people of all ages to make use of what it offers. This includes the activities and events that take place, and the resources held within the building such as books, WIFI, and free access to computers, as well as access to online resources, eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines.

Represent and engage with their local community in agreement with the Library Supervisor

Friends Groups help Bristol Libraries to ensure the library is at the heart of the community and people from all parts of the community are encouraged to be active Friends Group members, fully embracing equality, diversity and inclusion. They ensure that local views are accurately reflected and represent library users of all ages by providing feedback on services, opening hours and on planned changes.

Help to raise money and hold events and activities for people of all ages

Fundraising events could range from small cake sales to large scale literary events depending on the ambitions and abilities of Friends Group members. Friends Groups are responsible for the publicity, setting up and clearing away associated with events they organise.

Friends Groups cannot use the Bristol Libraries or Bristol City Council letterhead when fundraising or seeking prizes or donations, however Library Supervisors or Library



Development Officers can provide letters of support that are likely to satisfy the needs of funders and confirm Friends charitable purposes.

Members of Friends Groups share their fundraising and professional expertise which has enabled Groups to apply for funds to support their library from a wide range of local and national funders. Friends can apply for grants independently and in partnership with Bristol Libraries and other organisations for the benefit of the library. When independent applications are made it is expected that Friends will have discussed their ambitions and plans with their Library Supervisor and Library Development Officer.

Give regular updates to Bristol Libraries and their local community

Friends Groups use their designated noticeboard in the Library (if one is available) to display information about joining the group, activities they organise, fundraising targets and successes, meeting dates and the members of their committee. These promotional items should meet the library service standards of content and presentation.

A member of Bristol libraries Management Team should be invited to attend Friends Groups AGMs along with the Library Supervisor and Library Development Officer, and copies of the annual reports should be shared with Bristol Library Service and be available to members of the public along with the minutes from the meeting.

The Governance of Friends Groups.

Friends of Bristol Libraries Groups need to be formally constituted bodies.

New groups setting up should adopt Bristol libraries' model constitution for Friends Groups, and others already in existence are encouraged to adopt it when reviewing their governance to standardise support across the organisation. If the model constitution is not adopted the Friends Group constitution should at least cover all the elements of the model constitution. The constitutions of groups which are members of Bristol libraries should be shared with Bristol libraries together with the names of principal officers (usually Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary).

Bristol Library service is keen to work in constructive partnership with Friends Groups. However, if either a Friends Group's aims or objectives are opposed to the purposes laid out in the model constitution, or the group declines to communicate or work positively with their Library Supervisor or Library Development Office, then the Friends Group, after dialogue and consideration, may not be recognised by Bristol Library Service.

Financial transactions

Any donations or income raised by an event solely organised and hosted by the Friends will be retained and managed by the Friends Group.

Items bought for the library using funds raised by Friends Groups will be added to the library inventory, with full ownership, responsibility and title of the item(s) transferring to Bristol Libraries on the date of the donation.

Income and donations arising from events organised by the Bristol Libraries staff will be dealt with by library staff and retained by the service.



Should a Friends Group be wound up, Bristol libraries expect that any funds remaining be transferred to the Library Service. Any such funds will be ring-fenced for the use of the library originally supported by the former Friends Group and not used elsewhere.

Bristol Libraries conform to the ethos of being a universal and free service for all and therefore Friends Groups may not charge membership fees to join their group.

The Role of Bristol Libraries

Bristol Library Service runs and has responsibility for all Bristol Libraries, recruits and manages all paid staff and library volunteers, and is responsible for library stock and premises.

Bristol Library Service is committed to supporting Friends Groups and has the ambition that all libraries in Bristol have an active group.

Bristol Libraries will:

Manage and supervise library staff and library volunteers

The Library Service is responsible for the management and supervision of library staff and the day to day running of the library network.

Volunteers are recruited by the Library Service to help Bristol Libraries to extend and enhance the library offer. Volunteers are recruited, managed and supervised by our Library Volunteer Coordinator along with local library staff. These Library volunteers are distinct from Friends Group volunteers and are not required to be members of a Friends Group but may be if they so wish.

Ensure the support of the local Library Supervisor and Library Development Officer

A good collaborative relationship with these Library staff members is the key to having a successful group. The local Library Supervisor is the first point of contact for any enquiries from Friends Groups relating to day-to-day matters concerning the Library and its use. The Library Development Officer will support and advise the group on organisational and developmental issues including attending Committee meetings where requested and practicable. The Supervisor or Library Development Officer will deliver a library report at Friends AGMs. Senior managers will guide and support Library Supervisors and/or Library Development Officers to enable this relationship to flourish.

Employees of the Library Service are not able to act as Chair, Treasurer nor Secretary of a Friends Group nor be members of a Friends Group.

Take responsibility for library premises

The Library Service is responsible for any repairs or changes to the fabric of library properties, including planning applications and building development. Any such works must be carried out by contractors approved by Bristol City Council.



Friends Groups will be consulted and kept up to date on developments regarding building improvements and refurbishments by Library Supervisors and/or Library management.

Make library facilities available to Friends Groups

Friends Groups may have use of the library building outside of usual opening hours free of any charges to hold Friends events and Friends meetings in agreement with Library Supervisors following agreed booking procedures and provision of Public Liability insurance. A member of the Friends Group must be present during these sessions to ensure compliance with insurance, security and safety requirements.

All printing, photocopying, telephone and other sundry expenses incurred while using library facilities are to be recorded and paid for by Friends Groups.

Friends may display their promotional materials in the library on their designated noticeboard (if available) and other locations within the library with the agreement of the Library Supervisor.

Give updates and support to Friends Groups

Bristol Library service wants to ensure that all Friends Groups are informed and feel connected to each other and to a professional library service.

In the first instance Friends Groups should seek support from their Library Development Officer who may discuss the needs of the group and/or seek clarification with the Library Supervisor-or Library Group Manager on how best to offer assistance and guidance.

A representative from the Libraries Management Team will make themselves available to attend at least one meeting of local Friends Groups per year, usually the AGM, where they will give an update on library developments, answer any questions regarding the library service and hear about the Friends' achievements and plans for the future.

Friends Groups will need to arrange-Public Liability Insurance cover for events and activities inside and outside the library that fundraise, promote and encourage use and that are not covered by Bristol City Council's own Insurance. In the first year of a Group's existence Bristol Library service will met the full cost of this policy. In the second year this support will reduce to 50%. Thereafter the group will be wholly liable for the cost. Groups should ensure that a risk assessment is in place to record that they have considered health and safety at activities they organise and a copy of this should be given to the Library Supervisor up to 48 hours in advance of the activity.

Provide networking opportunities for Friends Groups

Bristol Library service will organise at least one Citywide Friends meeting a year. These are opportunities to meet and share good practice with other Friends Groups. In addition, Friends can discuss and work on topics of interest to all, and get updates from the Libraries Senior Management team. Suggestions for agenda items should be sent to the Library Development Manager.



Have clear priorities

Bristol Libraries defines the vision, strategy and sets the direction for the library service in line with Bristol City Council's overall strategy and priorities. This service strategy has been referred to several times in this document and can be viewed here. [Bristol Library Strategy](#)

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This framework will be updated at regular intervals to reflect the ongoing development of our Friends Groups network and Bristol Libraries strategy.