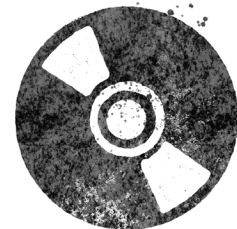
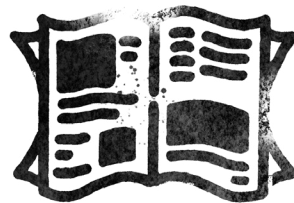


Towards a Social Value Toolkit for Public Libraries



Purpose of the Toolkit

This skeleton toolkit helps you evidence the social value of your library using a simple, flexible approach.

You can complete it in five steps:

1. Gather your routine data (e.g. visits, loans, events)
2. Run a short sampling or observation exercise
3. Speak to a small number of users (short interviews)
4. Capture staff reflections
5. Bring these together into a short 'story of change'

You do not need to complete everything - the toolkit is designed to be adaptable to your time and capacity.

What this Toolkit is For

This toolkit supports library staff to:

- Combine quantitative data (e.g. visits, loans) with qualitative insight
- Capture relational and everyday value (e.g. conversations, support, confidence-building)
- Produce clear, credible evidence for reports, partners, and decision-makers

How to Use this Toolkit

You can use:

- Routine usage data
- Sampling/observation
- Short interviews
- Staff reflective logs
- Scrapbooks or visual records

1) ROUTINELY COLLECTED QUANTITATIVE INDICATORS

What this is for: To show the scale and reach of your service.

You may already collect:

- Membership and visitor numbers
- Book loans and activity attendance
- PC and WiFi usage
- Digital support sessions

2) STRUCTURED SAMPLING & OBSERVATION

What this is for:

To capture both activity and less visible interactions (e.g. conversations, support).

How to use this tool:

- Run over one week (or shorter if needed)
- Tally each interaction in the table
- Add a brief note if something stands out
- Avoid recording identifiable personal data during observation; focus on patterns and anonymised examples.

Example notes:

- “Parent stayed after Bookbug and made plans to meet up with others”
- “Extended chat with a regular visitor”

Sampling Tally Sheet

Category	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Notes
Book enquiries								
Telephone / email enquiries								
PC assistance (quick)								
PC assistance (extended)								
Printer use / assistance								
Photocopying/scanning (+ assistance)								
Assistance with other devices								
Visitors in groups/ events								
Visitors working/ studying								
School/nursery visits								
Council/partner drop-ins								
Seeking access to services								
Seeking info on other groups								
Extended chat with staff								
Children playing (+ after Bookbug)								
Unaccompanied children								
Hearing aid batteries / ferrules								

A full list of observational categories and their explanations we drew upon in our study of St Ninians can be found in Appendix B.

3) SHORT INTERVIEWS

How to do this:

- Speak to a small sample
- Keep interviews to around 10–20 minutes in length
- Use questions as prompts, not a strict script
- Keep it conversational

Interview Consent & Setup (checklist)

- Provide information sheet; explain voluntary participation and right to withdraw.
- Gain written consent (or documented verbal consent if approved).
- Offer quiet corner, keep interviews brief and conversational.
- Signpost support if sensitive issues arise.
- GDPR/data security: store data on secure drives; restrict access; anonymise transcripts and reporting, delete audio after transcription.

Interview Schedule

Provide participants with an introduction to the research, information sheet and asked to complete a consent form.

How to record responses - Use a mix of simple ticks and short notes:

- Ticks for frequency or relevance
- Notes for examples, explanations, personal experience

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How often do you visit the library?	X
Daily	
Weekly	
Fortnightly	
Monthly	
Every 6 months	
Annually	

2. How long have you been visiting the library?	X
Less than 6 months	
7-12 months	
13 months -2years	
Monthly	
2-5 years	
More than 5 years	

3. How did you first hear about the library?	X
Friends/ family recommendation	
Visiting the library	
Stirling Councils Website	
Live locally	
NHS Health Professional e.g. Health Visitor	
Other (please specify):	

4. How do you normally get to the Library?	X
Walk	
Cycle	
Bus	
Car	

5. Are you a member of the library?	X
Yes	
No	

6. How often do you do the following if at all?	Very frequently	Quite often	Not very often	Never
Borrow books				
Access wifi				
Read books/ play with child				
Borrow cds/dvds				
Read newspapers or magazines				
Use computers				
Access IT training				
Access a quiet space				
Attend special events				
Other (please specify):				

7. Do you visit the library with anyone else?	X
Yes, family member(s)	
Yes, friend(s)	
Yes, other (please specify):	
No	

8. Do you attend any group(s) at the library (please provide details)?	Very frequently	Quite often	Not very often	Never
Book group (Friday and Saturday)				
Craft and Chatters				
Lego Club				
Write Club (Creative Writing Group)				
Family History				
Mini meet up				
Poetry Group				
Friends of the Mayfield/ Garden group				
Reminiscence Group				
Bookbug				
Job Club				
IT & Me				
Other (please specify)				

9. Do you attend groups at any other libraries?	X
Yes	
No	

If yes add details below:

Library	Group	Very frequently	Quite often	Not very often	Never

10. Do you attend any other classes or activities in the area?	X
Yes	
No	

If yes add details below:

Group/ activity	Location	Very frequently	Quite often	Not very often	Never

11. What are your main reasons for visiting the library?	X
Fun activity for me	
Fun activity for child	
Learning for me	
Learning for child	
Social interaction for me	
Social interaction for child	
Free activity	
Child friendly	
Informal space	
Borrowing Books	
Feeling part of the community/ meeting people	
Other 	

12. What benefit(s) have you got/ do you get from visiting the library?	X
Feeling part of the community	
Enjoying a fun activity	
Saving money on books/activities	
Meeting new people	
Bonding with child	
Mutual support/ experiential advice	
Getting to know the library	
Getting new book recommendations	
Helping develop my own skills	
Helping child's early literacy and development	
Other 	

Open Questions

13. Have you found out about any other groups, activities, or communities of support as a result of visiting the library? This is any type of group etc. (i.e., not just family groups/support).

.....
.....

14. If you have, have you joined/attended any?

.....
.....

15. Have you formed any new friendships or connections (to other groups or local services etc.) as a result of visiting the library?

.....
.....

16. Can you recall any particularly enjoyable or important moments from visiting the library?

.....
.....

17. Have you noticed any unexpected benefits or impacts in other areas of your life as a result of visiting the library?

.....
.....

18. Is there anything else you would like to share with us concerning the role of the library in your life?

.....
.....

A full list of interview questions we drew upon in our study of St Ninians and the rationale for their choice can be found in Appendix C.

4) STAFF REFLECTIONS - STAFF LOG

What this is for:

To capture the hidden work of staff (support, care, relationships).

How to use this tool:

Write short entries in the form of a log when something stands out:

- What happened
- What support was provided
- What difference it made

Example:

“Connected a library visitor to the writing group — slightly anxious at first, left feeling reassured and said they would return.”

STAFF REFLECTIVE LOG

Date / time	
Context (what was happening)	
Support provided (2–3 lines, no identifiers)	
What need did this meet?	
What changed (immediate/likely)?	
Follow-up / signposting	
Any implications for service design	

SCRAPBOOK / VISUAL LOG

What this is for:

To create a living record of activity and relationships. This could be physical or digital. This can also be used as a prompt for interviews and as evidence for the stories of value creation.

How to use this tool:

- Photos (where appropriate)
- Short captions
- Notes on activities or groups

Good practice:

- One entry per week or key activity
- Add a short note explaining why it matters

5) FROM DATA TO A 'STORY OF CHANGE'

Use these four domains to organise your evidence:

Domain	What it captures
Social Capital	Connection, trust, belonging
Cultural Enrichment	Learning, literacy, reading, creativity, local history
Economic Value	Cost savings, access to resources, digital inclusion
Health & Wellbeing	Reduced isolation, routine, confidence

- Start with your routine metrics (Section 1) to set scale and reach.
- Use sampling tallies (Section 2) to surface where relational/digital support happens most.
- Select 3–5 anonymised quotes or vignettes from interviews (section 3) that explain the “how and why”.
- Connect to local context (co-located services, transport, demographics) and staff insight (section 4) .
- Conclude with short outcome statements per domain and any value (e.g., reduced isolation).

Note:

This toolkit was generated from the Evidencing the Social Value of Public Libraries project materials and adapted for practical use in branch settings.

APPENDIX A

Possible sources of routinely collected usage data

Category	Description	Source/system	Source/system	Source/system
Registered members	Number of people with a valid library membership,	Spydus / BI	Social; Cultural	Indicating overall community reach.
Active members (12m)	Number of people with a valid library membership,	Spydus	Social; Cultural	Sustained participation and reading behaviours.
Users by age (under 16 / 16+ / 65+)	Demographic profile of membership,	Spydus BI	Social; Cultural; Wellbeing	Intergenerational reach; inclusion.
Visitor count (annual)	Total number of physical Library visits over the year.	Door counter	Social; Cultural	Use of library as social/cultural hub.
Book loans	Total number of books borrowed.	Spydus	Cultural; Economic	Reading and learning; cost reductions
Other loans (e.g., DVDs, devices)	Loans of non-book items such as DVDs, tablets	Spydus	Cultural; Economic	Access to media and tools without cost.
PC availability & usage	Number of PCs available and total sessions on Library computers.	ICAM	Economic; Social	Digital inclusion and opportunity access.
WiFi sessions	Total number of user connections to Library WiFi.	Hive WiFi	Economic; Social	Connectivity and study/work support.
Events run & attendances	Number of events delivered and total participants.	Local logs	Social; Cultural; Wellbeing	Community connection and participation.
IT & Me / digital help	Count of structured or informal digital support interactions.	Local logs	Economic; Social; Wellbeing	Confidence-building, help with essential tasks.
Enquiries & extended staff help	Recorded information requests and longer relational conversations with staff.	Sampling tally	Social; Wellbeing	Trusted support and relational labour.
Hearing aid batteries / ferrules	Distribution of small health-related items	Local logs	Wellbeing; Economic	Accessible health touchpoints.

APPENDIX B - CATEGORY LIST (USE FOR TALLY SHEET)

Category	Description	Linked domain(s)	Rationale
Book enquiries	Requests to find/ recommend/reserve/ order books	Cultural; Economic	Shows how staff encourage cultural participation, and reduce costs through borrowing.
Telephone / email enquiries	Remote requests for information or support	Social; Economic	Demonstrates the library as an accessible first point of contact
PC assistance (quick)	Brief digital help (login/print/open email)	Economic; Social	Evidence of frontline digital inclusion enabling access to essential tasks as services move online.
PC assistance (extended)	Sustained digital help incl. forms, jobs, banking	Economic; Social; Wellbeing	Key relational work supporting digital inclusion
Printer use / assistance	Use of printers; staff troubleshooting	Economic; Social	Supports essential admin tasks
Photocopying/ scanning (+ assistance)	Document copying or scanning tasks	Economic; Social	Enables completion of life admin
Assistance with other devices	Smartphones/tablets/ e-readers/laptops	Economic; Social; Wellbeing	Builds digital confidence, and reduces exclusion
Visitors in groups/ events	Attendance at organised activities	Social; Cultural; Wellbeing	Shows participation in cultural and social programmes that build community connection, confidence and belonging.
Visitors working/ studying	Use of space for work/ homework/study	Economic; Cultural	Library offers safe, free, quiet space for learning and work; supports education, employability and study.
School/nursery visits	Class/story/ educational visits	Cultural; Social	Supports early literacy, familiarity with civic space and community embedding; strengthens partnerships with schools.
Council/partner drop-ins	On-site partner services and advice	Economic; Social; Wellbeing	Library acts as civic hub providing multi-agency support in a trusted, low-pressure environment.
Seeking access to services	Requests re housing/ benefits/health/social care	Economic; Wellbeing	Shows library filling gaps in statutory support; helps people navigate complex systems and reduces stress.
Seeking info on other groups	Signposting to wider opportunities	Social	Shows library as connector within local ecosystem, helping users find activities that reduce loneliness and build networks.
Extended chat with staff	Non-transactional conversations (>2 minutes)	Social; Wellbeing	Captures relational labour essential to trust-building, reassurance and preventative wellbeing.
Children playing (+ after Bookbug)	Unstructured play in the space	Social; Wellbeing	Shows library as safe, welcoming environment supporting early socialisation, confidence and family routine.
Unaccompanied children	Children using the space independently	Social; Wellbeing	Demonstrates the library as trusted safe space; supports safeguarding and preventative wellbeing.
Hearing aid batteries / ferrules	Provision of practical health items	Wellbeing; Economic	Library as hyperlocal health touchpoint supporting independence and reducing cost barriers.

APPENDIX C - CORE QUESTION SET (ADAPTABLE PROMPTS)

Question	Rationale	Social Value Domain(s) Evidenced
How often do you visit the library?	Routine participation is tied to belonging, social connection, and wellbeing.	Social; Health & Wellbeing
How long have you been visiting the library?	Longevity of engagement reflects trust, familiarity, relationship-building.	Social
How did you first hear about the library?	Social networks, community referrals, and word-of-mouth reveal community embeddedness.	Social
How do you normally get to the library?	Travel mode links to accessibility, wellbeing, and cost barriers.	Health & Wellbeing; Economic
Are you a member of the library?	Membership affects access to books, digital services, and cost-free resources.	Cultural; Economic
Borrow books	Supports literacy, learning, and saves money.	Cultural; Economic
Access wifi	Digital inclusion and access to essential online services support financial resilience and reduce stress.	Economic; Health & Wellbeing
Read books / play with child	Supports early literacy, bonding, and wellbeing.	Cultural; Health & Wellbeing
Borrow CDs/DVDs	Cultural participation and free access to entertainment media.	Cultural; Economic
Read newspapers or magazines	Information access, literacy, and cost savings.	Cultural; Economic
Use computers	Digital inclusion, employability, and access to information.	Economic; Cultural
Access IT training	Skills development and digital literacy.	Economic; Cultural
Access a quiet space	Rest, focus, emotional wellbeing, and safe environment.	Health & Wellbeing
Attend special events	Cultural participation, meeting people, and building belonging.	Cultural; Social; Health & Wellbeing
Do you visit the library with anyone else?	Social connection, reduced loneliness, and bonding.	Social; Health & Wellbeing
Do you attend any group(s) at the library?	Groups foster friendships, creativity, wellbeing, and skills.	Social; Cultural; Health & Wellbeing; Economic
Do you attend any groups at other libraries?	Shows breadth of cultural participation and community networks.	Social; Cultural
Do you attend other classes or activities in the area?	Shows community engagement and cross service connections.	Social; Health & Wellbeing
Reasons for visiting	Shows motivations linked to fun, learning, socialising, cost savings, belonging.	Cultural; Social; Health & Wellbeing; Economic
Benefits gained from visiting	Covers community, enjoyment, savings, bonding, literacy, skills, and support.	Social; Cultural; Economic; Health & Wellbeing
Found other groups/services through the library?	Shows library as connector to wider community infrastructure.	Social; Cultural
Formed new friendships or connections?	Captures formation of social bonds and networks.	Social
Important or memorable moments?	Captures emotional significance and experiential value.	Social; Health & Wellbeing; Cultural
Unexpected benefits or impacts?	Reveals cross-domain impacts not directly captured by closed questions.	Economic; Social; Health & Wellbeing; Cultural
Anything else about the library's role in your life?	Captures relational, preventative health, place-based value.	Social; Cultural; Economic; Health & Wellbeing