

Public libraries set to benefit from cash boost to support National Year of Reading

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The government has announced up to £150,000 cash boost for public libraries to support the National Year of Reading.

- Funding will be targeted at areas most in need to unlock opportunity, support skills and learning, and reconnect people with reading for pleasure
- Additional £1,000 cash prize announced for each of the five English regional winners of The British Book Awards Library of the Year

Local library services in England will benefit from a funding boost of up to £150,000 as part of the National Year of Reading 2026, as the government invests in shared public spaces that bring communities together and widen opportunity for all.

The fund is expected to support projects across 72 library authority areas which are disadvantaged by high deprivation, weak social infrastructure and low library engagement, helping ensure that people in every part of the country can access the life-changing benefits of reading, regardless of income or background.

Further to this support, the government will build on excellence within the library sector by awarding a £1,000 cash prize to each of the five English regional winners of The British Book Awards Library of the Year to continue local reading projects, celebrating the best of civic pride across England.

In addition to providing access to millions of books free of charge, libraries offer opportunities for the public to learn new skills, access education and support and forge connections with their communities, playing a vital role in helping people improve their prospects and supporting the government's drive for national renewal.

As free, welcoming and trusted places, public libraries also help address cost of living challenges through free access to books and other material as well as free wifi and digital support, reducing everyday costs for families and individuals while ensuring no one is locked out of learning, culture or opportunity because of financial pressures.

The National Year of Reading's aim is to combat the decrease in reading for pleasure among children, young people, and adults by encouraging a 'Go All In' approach. This means embracing reading in any format, from traditional books and audiobooks to digital magazines and graphic novels.

Libraries Minister, Baroness Twycross said:

Reading opens doors to new worlds, sparks imagination and unlocks new opportunities. The National Year of Reading is inspiring people across the country to read and visit their local library to make the most of the many services they offer.

Ahead of publishing our new strategy for public libraries later this year, this funding will help our libraries reach even more people in their communities, ensuring that everyone,

regardless of their background, can experience the joy of reading and the benefits of our local libraries.

Karen Napier MBE, CEO, The Reading Agency said:

Libraries change lives. They are trusted, welcoming spaces where children discover the joy of reading, and communities come together and grow stronger. This investment from DCMS ensures that libraries in areas most in need have the practical resources they need to give the National Year of Reading real, lasting impact - reaching new audiences, growing membership and sharing the power of reading. Targeted funding can unlock extraordinary results and we are proud to work with DCMS and colleagues at the National Year of Reading to make sure the communities who stand to benefit most are at the heart of this national moment.

Alongside this, the Government intends to publish a new strategy for public libraries later this year to restore their position at the heart of communities and their pivotal role in improving the lives of working people. This will highlight how libraries support this government's Plan for Change ambitions to provide opportunities for all and will encourage cross-government action to ensure public libraries are fit for the future.

Notes to editors:

- The National Year of Reading 2026 is a joint initiative by the Department for Education and the National Literacy Trust.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-libraries-set-to-benefit-from-cash-boost-to-support-national-year-of-reading>