Friends of Libraries Unlimited Guidance Framework

This framework sets out how Friends Groups and Libraries Unlimited, the charity that runs libraries in Devon and Torbay, work together to ensure communities benefit from high quality library services.

Friends Groups have played a vital role in the development of our libraries in Devon and Torbay, and Libraries Unlimited is keen to maintain a good working relationship with Friends Groups in the years ahead.

Friends Groups are open to anyone who wants to get involved and are a practical way to support your local library and community.

Friends Groups are encouraged to be Members of Libraries Unlimited, and work in agreement with their Library Supervisors* to:

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

Friends Groups play a key role in helping Libraries Unlimited to fulfil its six core charitable purposes, which are to:

- Promote and encourage a love of reading.
- Provide free access to information to help people in their everyday lives.
- Inspire people of all ages to learn, imagine, create, succeed and realise their potential.
- Guide and support people to explore and connect to the wider world.
- Offer a welcoming space to meet, socialise, learn, read and enjoy new experiences.
- Support the health and wellbeing of individuals and local communities.

Most libraries have an active Friends Group. Please ask your local Library Supervisor 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 e.g. Centre Manager, Senior Library Supervisor, Library Supervisor or Team Leader.

The Role of Friends Groups

Friends Groups exist to support their local library. Each library will have individual priorities alongside those which are shared by all 54 of Devon and Torbay’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 are the main point of contact for Friends Groups. A good collaborative relationship with the local Library Supervisor is key to having a successful group. The Library Supervisor should be an Ex Officio committee member of the Friends Group.
All libraries in Devon and Torbay 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. 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, run by a charity, offers to them.

Friends Groups are actively involved with promoting their local library, as a key community resource and a charity, 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 Devon and Torbay 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 improvements. They should aim to proactively counteract any under-representation in the local community to support libraries and their services to be accessible to as many people as possible.

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

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

Friends Groups cannot use the Libraries Unlimited letterhead or charity number when fundraising or seeking prizes or donations, however Library Supervisors 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 Libraries Unlimited and other organisations for the benefit of the library. When independent applications are made Friends must have discussed and agreed their ambitions and plans with their Library Supervisor first.

**Give regular updates to Libraries Unlimited and their local community**

Friends Groups use their designated noticeboard in the library 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 Libraries Unlimited Leadership Team should be invited to attend Friends Groups AGMs along with the Library Supervisor, and copies of the annual reports should be shared with Libraries Unlimited.

**Membership of Libraries Unlimited**

Membership of Libraries Unlimited gives Friends Groups an opportunity to influence how their local library, and the organisation as a whole, are run as a charity.

All Friends Groups are entitled to be members of Libraries Unlimited once approved by the charity’s Board of trustees. As members of Libraries Unlimited they are encouraged to put forward one of their members to stand for election as one of the two Community trustees on the Libraries Unlimited Board. They also have one vote in the election of a Community trustee and may send a representative, with voting rights, to Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and General Meetings. Libraries Unlimited is committed to ensuring that the Board of trustees is as representative as possible of the communities it serves.

**The Governance of Friends Groups.**

In order to be a member of Libraries Unlimited, Friends Groups need to be formally constituted bodies. Some Friends Groups are registered as charities with the Charities Commission and will therefore have a constitution which meets the commission’s requirements.

New groups setting up should adopt the Libraries Unlimited 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 must cover all the elements of the model constitution.

The constitutions of groups which are members of Libraries Unlimited must be shared with Libraries Unlimited, together with the names and contact details of principal officers (usually Chair, Treasurer and Secretary).

Libraries Unlimited is keen to work in constructive partnership with Friends Groups. However, if either a Friends Group’s aims and 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 the Friends Group fails to uphold and represent the values of Libraries Unlimited, then the Friends Group, after dialogue and consideration, may not be recognised by Libraries Unlimited and will be removed from the Register of Members.

**All groups are encouraged to adopt current best practice. Excellent free advice and guidance can be found via the Charity Commission and NCVO websites.**

**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 Libraries Unlimited on the date of the donation.
Income and donations arising from events organised by the library will be dealt with by library staff and paid into Libraries Unlimited’s charitable funds.

Should a Friends Group be wound up, Libraries Unlimited expects that any funds remaining be transferred to Libraries Unlimited as being the organisation with the closest charitable purposes to those of the discontinued Friends Group. Any such funds will be ring-fenced for the use of the library originally supported by the former Friends Group and not used elsewhere.

The Role of Libraries Unlimited

Libraries Unlimited runs Devon and Torbay Libraries, recruits and manages all paid staff and library volunteers, and is responsible for library stock and premises.

Libraries Unlimited is a charity and is committed to supporting Friends Groups and ensuring that all libraries in Devon and Torbay have an active group.

Libraries Unlimited will:

Manage and supervise library staff and library volunteers

Libraries Unlimited is responsible for the management and supervision of library staff and volunteers, and the day to day running of the library.

Library volunteers help Libraries Unlimited to extend and enhance the library offer. With around 30 different roles available, volunteers are recruited, managed and supervised by local library staff. Library volunteers are not required to be members of a Friends Group, although it is hoped they would be.

Ensure the support of the local Library Supervisor

A good collaborative relationship with the local Library Supervisor is the key to having a successful group. The local Library Supervisor is the first point of contact for any enquiries from Friends Groups. They will attend committee meetings and deliver a library report at Friends’ AGMs. Senior managers will guide and support Library Supervisors to enable this relationship to flourish.

Employees of Libraries Unlimited are not able to act as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary of a Friends Group.

Take responsibility for library premises

Libraries Unlimited 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 Libraries Unlimited.

Friends Groups will be consulted and kept up to date on developments regarding building improvements and refurbishments by Library Supervisors and, where appropriate, members of the Premises Team.

Make library facilities available to Friends Groups

Friends Groups may have use of the library building outside of usual opening hours to hold Friends events and Friends meetings in agreement with Library Supervisors following agreed booking procedures. 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 and other locations within the library with the agreement of the Library Supervisor.

**Give updates and support to Friends Groups**

Libraries Unlimited wants to ensure that all Friends Groups are informed and feel connected to each other and to a professional and charitable library service.

Friends Groups should seek support from their Library Supervisor, who may discuss the needs of the group and/or seek clarification with the appropriate manager or support team on how best to offer assistance and guidance. Friends Group members are encouraged to sign up to Friends eNewsletters, which include key messages from the Board of trustees and CEO, information about library developments and news from other Friends Groups.

Information about governance and Libraries Unlimited membership will be shared with Friends Groups by the Libraries Unlimited Executive Officer. Occasional updates and guidance notes on specific matters that arise will be sent to the main contact for the group, usually the Chair.

A representative from the Libraries Unlimited Leadership Team will, wherever possible, 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 are included in the Libraries Unlimited insurance policy, with cover provided for events and activities inside and outside the library that fundraise, promote and encourage use (policy details are available on request). Groups should ensure that a risk assessment is in place to record that they have considered health and safety at activities they organise. Some exclusions apply and may need to be insured separately, for example large scale events, coach trips, sporting or hazardous fundraisers such as fun runs or parachute jumps. If this is the case, please consult your Library Supervisor as Libraries Unlimited may be able to arrange extra cover for you, though any additional costs will need to be met by the Friends Group.

**Provide networking opportunities for Friends Groups**

Libraries Unlimited organise three sets of regional Friends meetings twice a year. These are opportunities to meet and share good practice with other Friends Groups, and get updates from the Libraries Unlimited Leadership team. Suggestions for agenda items should be sent to your Library Supervisor.

Friends Groups are invited to other events during the year that arise such as Libraries Unlimited birthday celebrations, festival celebrations, the Libraries Unlimited AGM, and any other appropriate events.

**Have clear priorities**

Libraries Unlimited sets the direction of the library service in Devon and Torbay and has priorities agreed with our commissioners, Devon County Council and Torbay Council, as well as our major funders such as the Arts Council England, all under the regulation of the Charity Commission. These priorities, which support the core purposes of libraries, include the delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge, the Active
Life, Active Mind programme, Fun Palaces and other campaigns that encourage use, and promote equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as complementing Libraries Unlimited’s mission to bring ideas, imagination, knowledge and creativity to people’s lives and communities.

This update: November 2022
Next update: June 2023

This framework will be updated at regular intervals to reflect the ongoing development of our Friends Groups and Libraries Unlimited. If your questions are not covered in this document please contact your Library Supervisor, who will be able to arrange a response from the appropriate member of the team.