

## **Association of Senior Children’s and Education Librarians (ASCEL) Business Plan 2023-26**

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## 1. Executive summary

### Vision

The imagination and aspirations of all children and young people can soar through exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity, where their voices are heard, valued and reflected.

### Mission

At ASCEL we inspire all children and young people to reach their full potential by championing excellence, diversity and equality in libraries.

### Strategic outcomes for ASCEL

1. **Children and young people feel that libraries are safe, welcoming places where their voices are heard and valued**, particularly the voices of those who do not currently use libraries, children and young people from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and neurodivergent, disabled and D/deaf children and young people.
2. **The offer for Children and Young People is vibrant, dynamic and joined up** across public and school library services and through the Universal Library Offers and this in turn is integrated with other Arts Council England strategic investments in Children and Young people, especially Music Education Hubs and Local Cultural Education Partnerships
3. **Staff and volunteers working with children and young people in libraries have access to talent development and career pathways** and the value of specialist skills in this area is recognised and rewarded by employers
4. **The role of libraries in providing support and learning opportunities for children and young people is recognised and libraries are seen as first-call partners** for organisations delivering activities and interventions to support children and young people.
5. **ASCEL is a diverse, inclusive and effective organisation** that supports libraries to provide an excellent offer for children and young people through direct engagement with their audiences, and open and collaborative working with partners and which provides staff and volunteers with access to high quality training, support and national partnerships

## 2. Context

### 1.1 Opportunities and challenges for working with children and young people in libraries 2023-26

#### *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people*

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a damaging impact on children and young people's lives in the UK. This includes interruptions to education, mental health impacts and the loss of experiences and opportunities that were taken for granted before the pandemic. Ofqual<sup>1</sup> reports that "The quality and quantity of learning students undertook declined as a result of the pandemic", NHS data shows children and young people's mental health has declined since 2017<sup>2</sup> and The Prince's Trust's 2022 Youth Index results show that confidence and happiness among young people is the lowest since the survey began, thirteen years ago.<sup>3</sup> The Early Intervention Foundation has found that "there have been substantial changes to children's lifestyle and behaviour as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic"<sup>4</sup>.

The negative effects of these impacts have been felt disproportionately by children and young people already experiencing disadvantage. BBC Children In Need found a range of negative impacts among the children and young people supported by its grantees<sup>5</sup>. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities found that children and young people experiencing disadvantage, with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and from minority ethnic backgrounds were most likely to experience negative wellbeing impacts during the pandemic.<sup>6</sup>

Research by Carnegie UK<sup>7</sup> documents ways that library services have adapted their services during the pandemic and have worked with partners to reach families experiencing disadvantage. ASCEL has also worked with a range of partners to provide public libraries with support and guidance in adapting to digital service delivery so that safe and appropriate services could continue to be delivered to children and young people during the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> However, currently, not all children and young people engage with library services and there is still more work to be done to ensure libraries are seen as dynamic, safe and welcoming spaces for all. ASCEL recognise this and have developed an Action Plan developed to support libraries in delivering services to children and young

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-during-the-pandemic/learning-during-the-pandemic-review-of-research-from-england>

<sup>2</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmhealth/17/report.html>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/Document\\_YouthIndex2022.pdf](https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/Document_YouthIndex2022.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.eif.org.uk/files/pdf/growing-up-in-the-covid-19-pandemic-evidence-review-of-the-impact-of-pandemic-life-on-physical-development-in-the-early-years.pdf> (Specific health impacts on children aged 0-5 considered)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CN1081-Impact-Report.pdf>,

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report/7-children-and-young-people>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/making-a-difference-libraries-lockdown-and-looking-ahead/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ascel.org.uk/keeping-children-safe-online>

people and delivered a webinar held with health professionals to support good practice on the ground.<sup>9</sup>

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has recently published a Youth Review<sup>10</sup>, which sets out some of the challenges facing young people and youth services in the light of the pandemic and a plan for government to work with those supporting children and young people to recover from the impacts of the pandemic and ‘build back better’. The Children and Young People’s Promise<sup>11</sup> is a cross-cutting initiative which is part of the Universal Library Offers<sup>12</sup>. It sets out expectations for all public library services in relation to children and young people, which are very much in line with the findings from the Youth Review.

### *Placing children and young people, and libraries, at the heart of levelling up*

The government’s recently published ‘Levelling Up the United Kingdom’ white paper<sup>13</sup> sets out how it will spread opportunity more equally across the UK. Announced in the white paper, the new Youth Investment Fund<sup>14</sup> signals the importance of supporting young people for the success of the levelling up agenda. The Youth Review also discusses the importance of local services and a local focus in youth engagement. Libraries have a key role to play in levelling up: public libraries offer a national network and resource across all local authorities, including the 45 local authorities and 600 district wards earmarked for levelling up support.

Arts Council England also recognises the importance of work with children and young people through its continued commitment to working with Local Cultural Education Partnerships as part of its new 2021-2024 Delivery Plan: “LCEPs will play an important role in our delivery plan theme of strengthening our place-based approach and supporting the levelling up of communities most in need.”<sup>15</sup>

ASCEL’s network spans school and public libraries with a strong network of regional committees which speak to place-based issues and are able to support place-based partnership working. Developing a local youth-voice network will further strengthen ASCEL’s ability to demonstrate the potential of libraries working with children and young people to deliver real progress in priority places across the country.

## **1.2 What kinds of services do children and young people want?**

### *The findings from the DCMS Youth Review*

According to the findings of the Youth Review, young people asked for:

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/resource/childrens-mental-health-and-wellbeing-guide>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response/youth-review-summary-findings-and-government-response#executive-summary>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ascel.org.uk/childrens-and-young-peoples-promise>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/universal-library-offers>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/children-and-young-people/working-partnership>

- volunteering opportunities to give back to the community
- activities that support mental and physical wellbeing and skills development
- to be a part of decision making and help build back better.

DCMS plans to ensure that Duke of Edinburgh awards are offered in every state school and an expansion of the National Citizen Service, which has a requirement for summer holiday volunteering alongside other activities. In addition, more funding for the iwill fund with volunteering opportunities was announced, along with £7 million of funding through the new Volunteering Futures Fund to improve the accessibility of volunteering in arts, culture, sports, civil society, youth and heritage sectors. There is an opportunity to join up the existing library youth volunteering offer<sup>16</sup> with these schemes, as well as to develop further volunteering and youth activism activities in libraries which can be linked to these schemes.

The Youth Review reports that young people want to be able to:

- Have something fun to do after school/in the holidays/on weekends
- Make new friends
- Learn new skills
- Have a place to go for young people outside of school
- Be able to meet people from different background and mix with different cultures
- Have a place where I can be myself
- Be able to participate in lots of different activities
- Engage in social interaction and come together to create something

All of these reflect the principles of public library spaces, both online and face-to-face and can be offered by public and school library services. The Youth Review also emphasised the important role of universal services in youth provision, alongside targeted engagement, which, again is a guiding principle of the library offer.

### *Listening to the voices of children and young people*

The DCMS Youth Review affirms that “listening to young people’s voices” will be a key part of building back better. Arts Council England’s new 10 year strategy ‘Let’s Create’<sup>17</sup> also places a strong focus on listening to communities, co-creation of arts and cultural opportunities, and on self-expression and development of confidence in creativity among all communities, including those that do not currently have access to a wide range of high-quality cultural experiences.

Two of the three outcomes in the Delivery Plan<sup>18</sup>: ‘Creative People’ and ‘Cultural Communities’ align directly with the potential for public libraries to widen and improve opportunities for children, families and young people, as well as working with communities to understand and respond to their needs and interests.

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<sup>16</sup> <https://readingagency.org.uk/young-people/resources-for-librarians/recruiting-volunteers-for-the-challenge.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/letscreate>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/delivery-plan-2021-2024>

Listening to the voices of children and young people can help to increase cultural engagement<sup>19</sup>, but it can also help young people to build confidence and belief in themselves. The Youth Review highlights the many ways in which we can involve children and young people, including through social media, short surveys, discussion groups, voting and youth councils.

There is a wealth of good practice in relation to listening to young people and engaging them in decision-making about the design, delivery and development of services for them and about issues that affect them. Arts Council England's Quality Principles for Working with Children and Young People<sup>20</sup>, which have supported their investment since 2015 include "Actively involving children and young people". Many library services already engage children and young people<sup>21</sup> in decisions about service design and delivery and some principles for working with young people were developed by in 2018<sup>22</sup>. Outside of the public library sector, Young Trustees Movement<sup>23</sup> is working to promote youth voices in governance and the Roundhouse has developed a Youth Governance Guide<sup>24</sup>, which collates best practice in involving young people in governance. The National Youth Association has also developed the Hear by Right<sup>25</sup> organisational development programme to promote best practice in youth voice and participation. Many museums are already working in this framework.

There is opportunity to engage public libraries in wider conversations and practice about youth engagement, while also developing and co-ordination a national youth engagement network for libraries that support local decision-making and national libraries policy. This will help to ensure that the library offer is excellent, relevant and engaging for children and young people, build pathways into library careers and ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard in national conversations about the importance and future of libraries.

### 1.3 What is the need in the sector for an IPSO focussing on CYP and libraries?

#### *Raising the profile of children and young people's services in public libraries*

The Children and Young People's Promise is an essential element of the Universal Library Offers, drawing attention to the service that children and young people should expect from public libraries. However, research shows that there has been a loss of specialist expertise in the public library sector and a 'hollowing out' of services for children and young people<sup>26</sup>. The National Literacy Trust has

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<sup>19</sup> A key outcome for 'Cultural Communities' in the Arts Council England delivery plan

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/quality-principles-alignment-%E2%80%93-children-and-young-people#section-2>

<sup>21</sup> This report from 2012 describes ways in which library services in the East of England have listened to children and young people in designing services [http://static.roh.org.uk/learning/bridge/documents/Libraries-report-Dec-2012\\_21oct.pdf](http://static.roh.org.uk/learning/bridge/documents/Libraries-report-Dec-2012_21oct.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <https://readingagency.org.uk/children/Developing%20principles%20for%20working%20with%20young%20people.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> <https://youngtrusteesmovement.org/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.roundhouse.org.uk/about-us/our-work-with-young-people/youth-governance/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://nya.org.uk/quality/hear-by-right/>

<sup>26</sup> Robertson, C. and McMenemy, D. "The hollowing out of children's public library services in England from 2010 to 2016" *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 2020, Vol. 52(1) 91–105



worked with ASCEL and other partners to raise awareness of the underinvestment in school library services despite the evidence of their positive impacts on children and young people<sup>27</sup>.

At local authority level, the focus on Adult Social Care means that library services have worked hard to show how they can support this agenda, but their potential to support children and young people does not have the same recognition. Libraries provide excellent and inclusive children's services, which ASCEL has been at the heart of supporting and highlighting<sup>28</sup>, but this can still lack visibility. Arts Council England is working with CILIP, LGA and the Department for Education to develop an Early Years Strategy Framework for local authorities to use, with libraries at the heart. ASCEL national committee members have trained to be Peer Reviewers for LGA Peer Reviews of local authority early year's services and have represented library services by participating in a number of early years peer reviews prior to the pandemic.

### *Placing the Children's Promise at the heart of the Universal Library Offers*

Libraries Connected is currently the only funded Sector Support Organisation (which will in future be Investment Principles Support Organisation) for libraries. Since becoming an SSO in 2018, it has successfully reviewed and developed the Universal Library Offers, raised their profile and that of the sector and supported the library sector to step into the new opportunities that have arisen through this work. However, it has always been acknowledged that services for children and young people in libraries require specialist skills, partnerships and programmes.

ASCEL was founded by library staff to support this work and enable development and sharing of best practice. It is currently a volunteer-led organisation which has active regional committees and national impact. However, its capacity is limited and it is not able to take advantage of all opportunities for the sector, including regular requests for new partnerships and collaborations from new organisations who would like to engage with libraries on children and young people's services.

There is also a need to bring fresh energy and dynamism to the Children's Promise so that it drives innovation and improvement across the Universal Library Offers, bringing new ideas, perspectives and opportunities for libraries to engage and support children and young people across the Universal Library Offers.

We have 166 individual members from 140 library services. ASCEL members have been consulted about the changes to its governance structure and ambition to become an Investment Principles Support Organisation. Members strongly support ASCEL's strategic direction, including applying for IPSO status. They have highlighted the following priorities for ASCEL to support them effectively:

- High quality training and support to amplify the capacity and skills in the library sector in working with children and young people
- Avenues for professional development and progression

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<sup>27</sup> [https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2017\\_06\\_30\\_free\\_research\\_-\\_school\\_library\\_review\\_XxR5qcv.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/2017_06_30_free_research_-_school_library_review_XxR5qcv.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Rhyme Time Quality Principles <https://ascel.org.uk/rhyme-time-and-seven-quality-principles-toolkit> and work to develop Autism Friendly Libraries <https://ascel.org.uk/autism-friendly-libraries>

- Work to raise the profile of the contribution libraries make to supporting children and young people
- Collation of evidence to measure impact and toolkits to support library services to collect this evidence.



## 2. Vision and mission

### 2.1 Our vision

The imagination and aspirations of all children and young people can soar through exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity, where their voices are heard, valued and reflected.

### 2.2 Our mission

At ASCEL we inspire all children and young people to reach their full potential by championing excellence, diversity and equality in libraries

### 2.3 Our values

We have consulted with members and our committee to develop the following values and guiding principles for our work:

- We listen to and centre the voices of children and young people in the library sector
- We support the growth and development of members and staff at all levels via local and national networks, to ensure sector and organisational resilience
- We develop strong, effective and trusted partnerships and collaborations with others
- We are a kind, listening and empathetic organisation
- We work to ensure we are a diverse and inclusive organisation
- We are knowledgeable and draw on best practice and expertise to deliver high quality support and training
- We ensure that the work we do is always inclusive and has the widest possible benefits to ASCEL members and library services

### 2.4 Strategic objectives

To develop our strategic objectives for the next four years, we have considered what success will look like for ASCEL as an organisation:

#### Strategic outcomes for ASCEL

1. **Children and young people feel that libraries are welcoming places where their voices are heard and valued**, particularly the voices of those who do not currently use libraries, children and young people from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and disabled and D/deaf children and young people.
2. **The offer for Children and Young People is vibrant, dynamic and joined up** across public and school library services and through the Universal Library Offers and this in turn is integrated with other Arts Council England strategic investments in Children and Young people, especially Music Education Hubs and Local Cultural Education Partnerships

3. **Staff and volunteers working with children and young people in libraries have access to talent development and career pathways** and the value of specialist skills in this area is recognised and rewarded by employers
4. **The role of libraries in providing support and learning opportunities for children and young people is recognised and libraries are seen as first-call partners** for organisations delivering activities and interventions to support children and young people.
5. **ASCEL is a diverse, inclusive and effective organisation** that supports libraries to provide an excellent offer for children and young people through direct engagement with their audiences, high quality training and support and access to national partnerships

### 3. How we will change to deliver against this vision and mission

#### 3.1 Changing ASCEL's delivery model

ASCEL is a membership organisation, funded by subscriptions from member library services. It has a National Committee comprising 17 members and regional working groups in nine regions in England. Until now ASCEL has had limited capacity to deliver project work because it lacks a dedicated executive team and has relied on the volunteer and in-kind support of members to deliver and manage initiatives. It also lacks the capacity to manage large-scale grants because it is not an incorporated organisation.

In January 2022, ASCEL's members voted to change our constitution so that we will become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This is the first step towards separating the executive and governance functions of ASCEL and gaining a legal entity as an organisation. We will remain a membership organisation with the participation of 100 library services in England and Wales, and with regional committees, but will also appoint a board of trustees and move towards developing an executive function.

Becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation will enable ASCEL to build its ambitions to become an active delivery organisation with a strong voice for children and young people, whether in the short or longer term. Subject to funding, ASCEL will appoint Chief Executive, Programme Manager and Communications and Membership Manager posts and build executive support functions for finance and administrative support using agile contract-based working. This flexible approach will enable ASCEL to flex its capacity depending on available funding and the programme of work. If funding is not available to support this small team, then project managers will be appointed on a project-by-project basis as ASCEL applies for project-based funding.

ASCEL is in the process of making an application to the Charity Commission for charitable status and this will be achieved before October 2022. Subject to funding, the executive team will be in place by March 2023. The detail of ASCEL's approach to governance is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.

#### 3.2 Working directly with children and young people

ASCEL has always championed the needs and aspirations of children and young people, but our new Vision and Mission place the voice of the child and young person at the heart of our organisation and

its aims and objectives. In order to do this we propose to develop a youth engagement network across England, which represents the voices of all children and young people including from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and disabled and D/deaf children and young people.

We will pilot approaches for engagement across a nucleus of the network in the year 2023-24 and roll out the full network in 2024-26. The network will be co-designed with our regional working groups and local partner organisations. We will not necessarily attempt to represent all young people in every location, but taken as a whole the network will be designed to be diverse, inclusive and representative.

In devising youth engagement activities we will work with local experts and refer to best practice from recognised organisations in this field e.g. The National Youth Association, Young Voices Heard<sup>29</sup>, UNICEF Voices of Youth<sup>30</sup> and Cultural Education Partnerships<sup>31</sup> and with current Bridge Organisations that are awarded IPSO status. We will also prioritise working with children and young people in Levelling Up for Culture places and have included a proposed list of pilot places where our youth engagement network will be tested in the appendix to this document.

The purpose of this network will be to listen to children and young people when they tell us what excellent, vibrant and dynamic library services look like to them and ensure that our guidance and training for library services reflects this. There will be opportunities for children and young people to volunteer in their local library services and to co-design services in their locality. We will also bring together ideas, issues and feedback on library services from across the country and ensure that youth voices are centred in national policy debates. We will work with young people themselves to design ways for them to influence national policy in libraries and culture in a way that feels rewarding and meaningful to them.

We will work towards including children and young people in our own governance and in the governance of library National Portfolio Organisations.

#### **4.3 Placing literacy, learning and tackling disadvantage at the heart of our work**

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is an important strategic initiative that reaches families experiencing disadvantage. We will develop a pilot “train the trainer” model to equip library staff to advocate for reading and literacy as a core element of HAF delivery and support HAF workers to engage families with library-led reading interventions (e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Rhyme Times etc.) and support the home learning environment. We will also work with LGA on strategic interventions e.g. Family Hubs, which promote the role of libraries in delivering family learning and early years support and with BookTrust on the rollout of their targeted book gifting programmes via public libraries.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://youngvoicesheard.org.uk/2020/08/19/youthvoice-in-organisations-good-practice-tips/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.voicesofyouth.org/>

<sup>31</sup> Nottingham Cultural Education Partnership is delivered by Upstart Projects who have a specialism in youth voice training <https://upstartprojects.uk/youth-voice-training/>

#### 4.4 Ensuring we have a skilled, valued and responsive workforce

Staff and volunteers in modern library services need specific skills to ensure all CYP and families are welcomed and have a positive experience. We will engage with CYP, families and the sector, conduct research and analyse what skills are needed to support children and families in a modern public library service, drawing on training and development from across the children's sector. This will support relevance and inclusivity across libraries and support/inform our training plans.

#### 4.5 Partnerships and collaborations

ASCEL has a strong track record of working in partnership with other organisations inside and outside of the sector to inspire change and new ways of working that support excellent services for children and young people. This includes introducing Autism Friendly Libraries in partnership with Dimensions<sup>32</sup>, developing Principles for Working with Young People with The Reading Agency<sup>33</sup> and working with the National Literacy Trust to raise awareness of the importance of primary school library services<sup>34</sup>. We have worked with Libraries Connected and The Reading Agency to develop an Action Plan for Children and Young People's wellbeing<sup>35</sup>. We are also working with Empathy Lab to deliver events and activities that promote empathy through reading and we sit on the selection panel for their books. ASCEL is also working with BookTrust to develop and pilot targeted gifting programmes.

The DCMS Youth Review describes the need for greater alignment in the youth sector to maximise investment and for better impact evaluation to strengthen the evidence base of the impact of activities to support young people. There is a clear opportunity to build on ASCEL's existing partnerships to bring together organisations supporting children and young people across the library sector. This would enable the sector to co-ordinate initiatives and identify opportunities to align evaluation to ensure that the impact that public and school library services have on children and young people's lives is captured and shared widely. We will co-convene the Children and Young People's Promise Alliance together with Libraries Connected to provide a forum for exchange, co-ordination and evidence gathering which will also strengthen this Universal Library Offer.

All of our partner relationships will be governed by clear memoranda of understanding and service level agreements where appropriate. Our approach to relationship frameworks is set out in section 7.

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.ascel.org.uk/news/autism-friendly-libraries>

<sup>33</sup> <https://readingagency.org.uk/children/Developing%20principles%20for%20working%20with%20young%20people.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> [https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/The\\_Future\\_of\\_Primary\\_School\\_Libraries.pdf](https://cdn.literacytrust.org.uk/media/documents/The_Future_of_Primary_School_Libraries.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://cypmhc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CYPMHC-Strategic-Plan-final.pdf>

## 5. Delivering our strategic outcomes

### 5.1 How our strategic outcomes support Arts Council England's Investment Principles

ASCEL will focus its activities on two of Arts Council England's Investment Principles:

- Inclusivity and relevance
- Ambition and quality

In our work these two principles are inter-linked, especially because our delivery plans have a focus on direct engagement of children and young people, particularly those who do not currently use libraries, children and young people from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and disabled and D/deaf children and young people, so that the sector can provide an excellent offer for this audience.

As an organisation we are committed to implementing and promoting all four of Arts Council England's Investment Principles in our values and approach.

Below we have set out for each of our strategic outcomes:

- How they relate to ACE Investment Principles
- Activities that will enable us to deliver the outcome
- SMART objectives that will enable us to measure our success

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
Children and young people feel that libraries are safe welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusivity and relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop youth engagement approach (23-24)</li> <li>• Commission evaluation partners to assess the pilot approaches, impact on children and young people of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people agree that they have been involved in designing youth engagement approach during pilot phase</li> <li>• Children and young people from all ethnic and cultural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 120 CYP engaged over the period 23-26 in 20 places.</li> <li>• At least 60% of participating CYP agree that they have been involved in designing the Youth Engagement Network during pilot phase and 60%</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
places where their voices are heard and valued		<p>engagement and provide best practice recommendations for rollout. (2023)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot Youth Engagement Network approaches, including in Levelling Up for Culture Places (23-24)</li> <li>• Roll out Youth Engagement Network nationally (24-26)</li> <li>• Build partnerships with Duke of Edinburgh Award, National Citizen Service and Arts Award to explore how participation in the Youth Engagement Network can be accredited. (2023-26)</li> <li>• Engage with CILIP and Local Cultural Education Partnerships about how the Youth Engagement Network can support pathways into library and other creative professions. (2023-26)</li> </ul>	<p>backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and disabled and D/deaf are engaged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The youth engagement network is empowering, appealing and relevant to children and young people</li> <li>• A diverse range of children and young people feel that library services are places where their voices are valued and heard</li> <li>• Children and young people’s ideas and opinions expressed through the network influence decisions made in library service policy provision by 2026</li> <li>• Work to ensure the ASCEL Youth Engagement Network recognises contributions through accredited schemes and offers pathways for progression into library and other creative professions has commenced by 2026</li> </ul>	<p>participating in the rollout phase agree that they have been involved in co-designing library services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least 60% of participants agree that they have gained new skills and/or increased confidence as a result of participating in the Network</li> <li>• CYP voice from the network will have been heard (video/presentation/written report) at min. 10 national meetings, including the CYP Promise Alliance meetings and ideas/issues raised by the network will have influenced library service development/offer in local area and national policy development and organisations working nationally.</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
<p>The offer for Children and Young People is vibrant, dynamic and joined up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambition and quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-convene the Children and Young People’s Promise Alliance together with Libraries Connected, engaging a wide range of partner organisations (2023-26)</li> <li>Use the Children and Young People’s Promise Alliance to co-ordinate and amplify activity supporting CYP in libraries (2024-26)</li> <li>Bring the voice of the Youth Engagement Network to the Alliance so that their voices have an impact on library policy and practice (2023-26)</li> <li>Work with the Alliance and Youth Engagement network to identify gaps in CYP services in libraries and explore ways in which these can be addressed</li> <li>ASCEL will work together with Alliance members and the Youth Engagement Network to identify good and innovative/emergent practice across a range of areas of children’s and young people’s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All national organisations/bodies working on Children and Young People’s initiatives in libraries sign up as members of the Alliance by end 2025</li> <li>Members of the Youth Engagement Network are able to identify ways in which they have influenced national policy by 2026</li> <li>At least one new project developed by sector organisations will have been devised in response to gaps identified by children and young people and Alliance members by 2026</li> <li>Good and innovative/emergent practice will be identified in at least 3 different areas of CYP services in libraries and disseminated via case studies, toolkits and the ASCEL Conference (2023-26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All participating organisations have participated in evidence mapping by end 2024</li> <li>At least 3 joint submissions to national policy engagement (e.g. white papers, APPGs etc.) have been submitted by 2026</li> <li>Qualitative feedback from Alliance Members will report influence of CYPPA on new projects and initiatives, ways of working or other, unforeseen impacts from joint working.</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
<p>Staff and volunteers working with children and young people in libraries have access to talent development and career pathways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ambition and quality</li> </ul>	<p>services in libraries and promote this to ASCEL members and the wider sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create specialist CYP skills map for staff working in libraries and develop routes into the sector and into other creative professions for young people inc. the CYP Library Engagement Network with a focus on apprenticeships.</li> <li>Engage with CILIP to develop professional development pathways for specialist Children’s and Young People staff working in libraries (2023-26)</li> <li>High-quality training is provided to ASCEL members on topics identified in collaboration with the sector, children and young people and national organisations (2023-26)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A development pathway for CYP specialists is mapped by CILIP and ASCEL by 2024</li> <li>At least 3 training modules (one per year) are designed and delivered to ASCEL staff and volunteers by 2026</li> <li>The training is judged to be good or excellent by at least 70% of participants</li> <li>there will be a knowledge and/or confidence improvement increment of 50% overall measured in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 20 library services have incorporated CYP skills identified in the skills map into library staff annual personal development plans by 2026.</li> <li>Libraries Connected have incorporated CYP skills across WF development activities and included in any accreditation plans for libraries.</li> <li>At least 20 YP have engaged with some professional pathway development activities via the CYP Library Engagement Network by 2026</li> <li>Training plan developed by end of 2023 and reviewed each year following completion of research/evaluation/engagement activities. 300 staff working in library services will have attended at least 1 training session over the course of 2023-26.</li> <li>Annual reviews of training offer in ASCEL National and Regional Committees will reflect a greater and</li> </ul>



Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relevant, challenging and engaging conferences for ASCEL members, including the voices of children and young people as well as experts in the field of CYP services in libraries (2023-26)</li> </ul>	<p>before and after polls in each training.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASCEL conference is delivered in each year of 2023-26</li> <li>At least 60% of ASCEL member organisations are represented at conference</li> </ul> <p>At least 70% of those completing post-conference surveys rate their experience as 'good' or 'excellent'</p>	<p>more relevant offer to library staff vs baseline of 2022.</p>
<p>The role of libraries in providing support and learning opportunities for children and young people is recognised and libraries are seen as</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusivity and relevance</li> <li>Ambition and quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop/support interventions engaging families experiencing disadvantage &amp; disseminate learning via webinars &amp; national/international conferences- position library services as key partners in strategic early years/family interventions. (2023-2025)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot 'train the trainer' approach to engaging HAF staff with literacy support in 3 Levelling Up locations in England 2023-4               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot projects train min. 15 library staff with 'train the trainer' materials; min. 40 HAF delivery workers participate in literacy support training</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post training feedback from library staff will show increased confidence and skills in engaging partners with literacy interventions. Post-training feedback from HAF partners will show greater understanding of how to engage HAF families with literacy and the benefits for them.</li> <li>Aim for increase in Summer Reading Challenge participation among families receiving HAF in pilot locations (exact targets TBC)</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
first-call partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Children and Young People’s Promise Alliance will map existing data and how it can be used to demonstrate the impact of libraries on the lives of children and young people (2023)</li> <li>• We will commission research to understand and build the impact case for children and young people’s activities in libraries (2024-25)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ASCEL is represented on all national programme steering groups for Early Years literacy interventions (esp Family Hubs &amp; Bookstart targeted gifting)</li> <li>○ ASCEL presents findings from HAF pilot at 3 conferences (1 international) in 2024/5</li> <li>○ 3 webinars delivered in 24-26, target 50 attendees at each webinar</li> <li>• Best practice report produced in collaboration with ASCEL regional committees by and CYP Promise Alliance by 2025</li> <li>• ASCEL, together with Libraries Connected and Alliance members, will</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best Practice report downloaded 150 times by 2026</li> <li>• Learning distance travelled measured in each webinar - target of 30% improvement in confidence/knowledge about BP in EY interventions in libraries</li> <li>• 80% rate webinar as 'good' or 'excellent'</li> <li>• 50% agree they have learned more about library contribution to EY support.</li> <li>• Research report downloaded at least 200 times</li> <li>• Paper based on research delivered at at least 3 conferences, including one international conference. Research</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will pro-actively engage with the Universal Library Offers on what is needed for CYP across the library offer (2023-26)</li> </ul>	<p>collate, condense and publish a summary of existing evidence of the impact of libraries on children and young people and promote this to local and national decision-makers (23-24)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least one research report and accompanying toolkit of resources will be published exploring and evidencing the impact of libraries on children and young people (2026)</li> <li>ASCEL will ask the Youth Engagement Network to consider what is missing and what is needed in each of the Universal Library Offers and present the findings to the Universal Offer groups (2026)</li> <li>ASCEL will be represented in advisory/steering groups for all new initiatives affecting CYP in England by 2026</li> </ul>	<p>findings used to shape the training content in Y3 of grant (25/26)</p>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work with partners in the Alliance to raise profile of CYP library offer and promote its impact with wider stakeholders (2023-26)</li> <li>We will ensure that ASCEL is included in all key national programmes involving CYP/Libraries and that the Youth Engagement Network's voice is heard in planning and delivery (2023-26)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start new partnership agreements with at least 3 new national bodies (key targets Dept for Education, Public Health England, National Network for Social Prescribing) by 2026.</li> <li>At least 40 local/regional decision-makers or potential strategic partners have participated in a regional ASCEL event by 2026</li> <li>ASCEL reports are quoted/mentioned/used/disseminated by min. 10 different partner organisations by 2026</li> <li>Number of policy makers/decision makers/non-library partner organisations attending report launches/conference/roundtable discussions is monitored starting 2024 and increases by 15% YOY during grant</li> </ul>
ASCEL is a diverse, inclusive and effective organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusivity and relevance</li> <li>Ambition and quality</li> <li>Dynamism</li> <li>Environmental responsibility</li> </ul>	<p><b>Ambition and quality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will explore partnerships across the Arts Council England investment portfolio to identify new ways of working that can help to meet gaps in services and join up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisations new to working in libraries are engaged in the Alliance, amplifying partnerships, by end 2026</li> <li>We will work towards ensuring that a minimum of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See appended Investment Principles Plan</li> </ul>

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<p>investment/ensure it is fully engaged with the library sector</p> <p><b>Inclusivity and relevance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASCEL will recruit a board of trustees that reflects the diversity of our society</li> <li>• We will work towards including young trustees in our board and will include consideration of this in our pilot of the Youth Engagement Network</li> <li>• ASCEL will develop an organisational culture that prioritises kindness, inclusivity and listening</li> <li>• We will base our organisation in a Levelling Up for Culture place to demonstrate our commitment to equitable access to cultural opportunities in all communities</li> <li>• We will encourage applications for executive positions from people under-</li> </ul>	<p>2 board members are from under-represented backgrounds by 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will develop an action plan for inclusion of young trustees in our board by 2025</li> <li>• We will source office space in a Levelling Up for Culture place by 2023</li> <li>• We will work with trustees to ensure our recruitment approaches and criteria are as inclusive as possible by 2023</li> <li>• We will work with trustees to develop policies and procedures that reflect our organisational values and ensure all employees, contracted staff and collaborators feel safe and welcomed by the organisation by 2023</li> <li>• We will ensure that all our training and resources are available digitally by 2026</li> </ul>	

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<p>represented in the cultural sector</p> <p><b>Dynamism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will continue our work to support libraries to engage with digital delivery channels, where appropriate, and to deliver training and professional development to library staff and volunteers via digital means.</li> <li>We will develop an agile team, using both permanent staff members and contracted services that will allow us to flex up and down depending on demand, which will support our long-term sustainability and dynamism</li> <li>We will explore opportunities for partner organisations working with CYP in libraries to support the costs of the Youth Engagement Network as they benefit from ideas, feedback and co-creation support from the network</li> </ul> <p><b>Environmental responsibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will have procured contracted resource for finance, HR and administrative services by 2023</li> <li>We will have tested and developed a sustainability plan for the Youth Engagement Network by 2026</li> <li>We will have implemented our Environmental Action plan by 2023 and this will be a standing item in the board of trustees meeting</li> </ul>	

Strategic outcome	ACE Investment Principle	Activities	SMART Objectives	Outcomes (as per activity plan)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will work to minimise our environmental impact as an organisation</li> <li>• We will work with young people and the library sector to explore how youth voice and engagement can have a positive impact on the sector's environmental footprint</li> </ul>		

## 6. Monitoring and evaluation

### *Monitoring our activities*

ASCEL will sign up to Arts Council England's impact and insight toolkit<sup>36</sup> once we are confirmed as an IPSO. We are particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity for peer review and to engage in cross-sector collaboration about collecting, analysing and interpreting data.

The board of trustees will be closely involved in monitoring the progress of the executive team against the strategic objectives and activities set out in the business plan and in reporting any issues, delays or key successes to Arts Council England.

The Chief Executive will prepare a progress report for trustees for each quarterly meeting and there will also be an annual review and planning meeting of trustees, with the support and engagement of the executive team to look at what has been delivered so far, what needs to be achieved in the year ahead and any adjustments to the business plan that may be necessary.

Libraries Connected trustees and Chief Executive have offered to mentor ASCEL as we go through the process of becoming an IPSO and a charity with an executive team. They will support trustees to engage effectively in monitoring activities and will also support the new Chief Executive to ensure they deliver against trustee expectations and the organisation's business plan.

### *Evaluating our own work*

We will commission an external evaluator to assess the pilot of the Youth Engagement Network and provide recommendations for rollout. As part of this we plan to ask the evaluator to develop or adapt a set of measures which explore the satisfaction and experiences of the young people participating in the network. This is because success for ASCEL does not just look at the outcomes we are able to achieve within the sector, but at the experiences of children and young people who give us their time and opinions as through the Network.

We will evaluate all our training programmes and annual conference through regular participant surveys. We will also design and deliver an annual ASCEL member satisfaction survey alongside qualitative feedback on member perceptions and engagement with ASCEL from our regional working groups.

### *Bringing together impact data from the sector*

In addition to evaluating our own work, through the Children and Young People's Promise Alliance we will work with the sector to better co-ordinate and make visible data on the impact of the sector on the lives of children and young people.

As part of this we will work with sector organisations to collate and summarise impact data, as well as exploring the opportunity for an online directory or repository of evaluation data that will be available to the sector and to decision-makers at local and national levels.

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<sup>36</sup> [Impact & Insight Toolkit | Impact and Insight Toolkit](#)





We will explore the potential to gain funding for financial return on investment (ROI) analysis for children and young people's library services and school library services, as well as social return on investment (SROI).

As part of this, we will also participate, together with Libraries Connected, in the initiative to develop a strategy around data assessment that Arts Council England is leading through the English Public Libraries Working Group.

## 7. Governance and organisational transformation

### *Overview*

ASCEL is planning a major transformation which will include becoming a registered Charitable Incorporated Organisation and the recruitment of a board of trustees that reflects the society we serve and is able to promote and embed our organisational values.

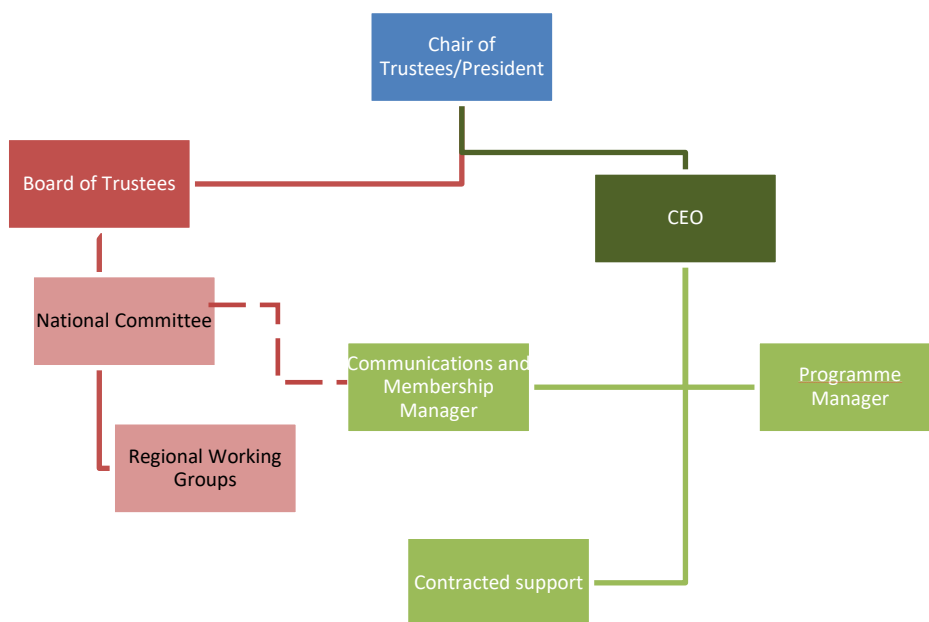
We will maintain our regional working groups because they provide a valuable connection to our membership and to the reality of library service delivery on the ground. They comprise staff delivering public and school library services, at various stages in their careers and levels of seniority. We anticipate that the regional working groups will continue to provide voice for staff providing children and young people's services in libraries as well as a framework for local partnerships and delivery networks, especially in the development of our Youth Engagement Network.

Our board of trustees and new executive team will share responsibility for driving the culture and values of ASCEL and for ensuring that it is a kind, inclusive and listening organisation. The executive team will have responsibility for delivering the business plan and the board of trustees will hold them to account.

As has been mentioned in section 6, Libraries Connected have offered to mentor ASCEL as we transition to the new structure and take on responsibilities of an IPSO within the Arts Council portfolio. If ASCEL is unsuccessful in this, we anticipate that Libraries Connected will continue to support the board of trustees. In this case, project managers will be appointed on a project-by-project basis as ASCEL applies for project-based funding to help us achieve our strategic objectives.

### **7.1 Governance changes required and timeline**

The diagram below sets out our new governance structure, which will be in place by March 2023:



### Board of trustees

Need to add in information about the composition of the Board of Trustees following advice from lawyers.

### Regional Committees

ASCEL has 9 Regional Committees, made up of all member library services based in that region. The Regional Committees meet every quarter to discuss relevant local and national issues in relation to delivering CYP services in public and school library services.

There will be a direct line of accountability and engagement between the Board of Trustees and the Regional Committees, to ensure members' voices are represented in strategic decisions. In terms of project development and delivery, there will be a dotted line of communication and engagement between the executive team and the working groups. This is notionally linked to the Communications and Membership Engagement manager but this relationship will be piloted and reviewed once the new governance and executive structures are in place.

### ASCEL Chair

The ASCEL Chair will become the Chair of the Board of Trustees once ASCEL is registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. They will serve a two year term and the new Chair will be elected by the membership at the end of that term. The Chair-Elect will shadow the current Chair for a minimum of 6 months before taking up position, in order to ensure a smooth transition of leadership.

### Role of the Chief Executive

A new role of Chief Executive will be created with a small paid team. Together, the Chief Executive and their team will ensure delivery of the organisation’s agreed business plan, manage the day-to-day finances of the organisation and will develop new areas of work in line with ASCEL’S overall mission and purpose. There will be a close working relationship between the President/Chair of Trustees and the Chief Executive.

### Timeline for governance changes

Month	Activity
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Charity Commission application</li> <li>• Seven board members from ASCEL membership in place, including Chair</li> </ul>
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charity Commission application approved</li> </ul>
July-September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit six external trustees</li> </ul>
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold first board meeting</li> <li>• <i>(Outcome of Arts Council England application known)</i></li> <li>• Agree resourcing/recruitment approach with trustees</li> <li>• Working group on organisational values created</li> </ul>
November 2022 - March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees engage with regional committees and communicate strategic plan for 2023-26</li> <li>• Chair and up to 3 trustees to sit on interview panel for CEO position</li> <li>• Hold board meeting (Jan 2023)</li> </ul>
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New executive and governance structures in place</li> <li>• Board meeting, meet and greet with Executive Team and joint values/planning session (April 2023)</li> </ul>

## 7.2 People and resourcing plan

### *Vision for ASCEL people*

ASCEL’s values govern our vision for ASCEL people and in particular the following two values:

- We are a kind, listening and empathetic organisation
- We work to ensure we are a diverse and inclusive organisation
- We are knowledgeable and draw on best practice and expertise to deliver high quality support and training

ASCEL has the opportunity to create a new executive team, and we want to ensure that it is a welcoming and supportive working environment where our values of empathy, listening and kindness are embodied. Our trustees will work to ensure that our resourcing approach, including the job descriptions, advertisement and selection process are as inclusive as possible and enable the widest possible pool of candidates to feel that their applications will be welcomed and considered fairly.

We will build small core team which will be able to work flexibly, making accommodation for caring responsibilities and welcoming opportunities for job-sharing and home working where requested and subject to the requirements of the role.

### *Flexible resourcing*

Beyond the core team of 3 FTE positions, we will resource other organisational and business needs using contracted resource which will allow us to flex up or down as needed. This will be both cost effective and enable us to be a dynamic and responsive organisation. We will develop a specification for each business requirement and seek tenders to respond to these. The tenders will be reviewed by the CEO and members of the Trustee resourcing sub-committee.<sup>37</sup>

### *Resourcing plan*

Our first priority is the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer. We plan to appoint to this role in Q4 2022/23, and for the successful candidate to be in post in Q1 2023/24.

The resourcing plan is developed by reviewing what tasks and activities we need to deliver; considering what core competencies are needed to fulfil these tasks; and then aligning these to job roles and other sources of talent available to us.

Below is a summary of the resource plan to support delivery of the business plan.

<b>Activities</b> <i>(What tasks will ASCEL need to deliver?)</i>	<b>Core competencies</b> <i>(What skills and knowledge will ASCEL need to deliver these tasks?)</i>	<b>Resources and roles</b> <i>(How will these be delivered?)</i>
<b>1. Organisational transformation</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruit new members of staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills specification &amp; writing</li> <li>Analytical skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trustees resourcing committee</li> <li>CEO (executive team)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build strong relationship with board and regional committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder management</li> <li>Communication– f2f and written, social media and newsletter/briefings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Board of Trustees</li> <li>CEO</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up new office and implement positive organisational culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership</li> <li>practical project management and logistical skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO</li> <li>Board (set direction)</li> <li>Wider Executive Team</li> <li>IT support provider</li> <li>Admin support provider</li> </ul>
<b>2. Youth Engagement Network</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop youth engagement approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research/evidence gathering and analysis</li> <li>youth engagement</li> <li>project design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience/expertise in specifying evaluations and working with evaluation partners</li> <li>Project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>

<sup>37</sup> Possible service providers include Community Accounting Plus, a registered charity that provides finance and accounting services to charities <https://www.caplus.org.uk>

<b>Activities</b> <i>(What tasks will ASCEL need to deliver?)</i>	<b>Core competencies</b> <i>(What skills and knowledge will ASCEL need to deliver these tasks?)</i>	<b>Resources and roles</b> <i>(How will these be delivered?)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot Youth Engagement Network approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management</li> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roll out Youth Engagement Network nationally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management</li> <li>Entrepreneurial/business management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships with Duke of Edinburgh Award, National Citizen Service and Arts Award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with CILIP and LCEPs about pathways into library and other creative professions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement skills</li> <li>Strategic planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather impact evidence of Youth Engagement Network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation and monitoring skills</li> <li>Analytical skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>
<b>3. Children and Young People's Promise Alliance</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with LC to set up the CYP Promise Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Project planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing the CYP Promise Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management</li> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bringing together evidence of impact from alliance members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Analysis and synthesis skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<b>4. HAF programme engaging families experiencing disadvantage</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up pilot 'train the trainer' programme in 3 areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project management</li> <li>Training development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>External expert partner</li> </ul>
<b>5. Training and progression programmes</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting a training needs assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Question drafting</li> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing a training plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project planning</li> <li>Training development expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commissioning and managing delivery of training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project planning</li> <li>Project management</li> <li>Logistical and admin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> <li>Administrative support</li> </ul>

<b>Activities</b> <i>(What tasks will ASCEL need to deliver?)</i>	<b>Core competencies</b> <i>(What skills and knowledge will ASCEL need to deliver these tasks?)</i>	<b>Resources and roles</b> <i>(How will these be delivered?)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with CILIP to develop progression pathways for library staff working with CYP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Project planning</li> <li>Strategic thinking</li> <li>Experience in library professions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<b>6. Stakeholder engagement and communications</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging new members in the CYP Promise Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide secretariat support for the CYP Promise Alliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrative support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raising awareness of the range of activities and impacts libraries deliver for CYP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthesising and promoting evidence of impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Analysis and synthesis skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<b>7. Member engagement</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular communications with members about ASCEL's work via newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing for information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging with Regional Committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>F2F communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and delivering ASCEL conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project planning</li> <li>Project management</li> <li>Logistics and admin</li> <li>Stakeholder engagement</li> <li>Communications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO (to lead)</li> <li>Programme Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Manager</li> </ul>
<b>8. Finance and administrative functions</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage day-to-day bookkeeping and payroll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finance and book-keeping skills</li> <li>Knowledge of payroll</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted finance support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare annual accounts for Charity Commission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of charity reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted finance support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete financial monitoring for ACE grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of how to prepare accounts for grant reporting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted finance support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support executive team diary, meeting, document</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracted admin support</li> </ul>

<b>Activities</b> <i>(What tasks will ASCEL need to deliver?)</i>	<b>Core competencies</b> <i>(What skills and knowledge will ASCEL need to deliver these tasks?)</i>	<b>Resources and roles</b> <i>(How will these be delivered?)</i>
management and emails to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of how to work with Outlook 365 and Teams</li> <li>• Communication/writing skills</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage office, stationery, IT contractor, equipment and utility contracts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational skills</li> <li>• People management skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO and contracted admin support</li> </ul>

The quarter by quarter plan recruitment plan is as follows:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Business quarter</b>		
	<b>Q4 21/22</b>	<b>Q1 22/23</b>	<b>Q2 22/23</b>
<b>CEO</b>	Recruitment	In post	
<b>Programme Manager</b>		Recruitment	In post
<b>Engagement and Communications Manager</b>	Contract resource	Recruitment	In post
<b>Finance</b>	Contract resource		
<b>Administration</b>	Contract resource		



## 8. Relationship framework

In Section 4 we have set out the importance we place on partnerships to deliver against our strategic outcomes. The Children and Young People's Promise Alliance will be the main platform for us to develop national partnerships and co-ordinate sector activities. The Youth Engagement Network will also depend on strong local partnerships to support its successful establishment and delivery.

We will also develop ad-hoc partnership activities with a range of local and national organisations as new issues and opportunities arise. Local partnerships will be managed by ASCEL members and regional committees, while national partnerships will be managed by the Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees with the support of the Communications and Membership Engagement Manager.

We have engaged the following organisations in conversations about our business planning process and in particular to understand their interest in the Children and Young People's Promise Alliance and Youth Engagement Network:

- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
- Arts Council England
- Libraries Connected
- CILIP
- The School Library Association
- National reading charities
- Music Education Hubs
- Local Cultural Education Partnerships
- Local Government Association

We have formal partnership agreements in place with Libraries Connected, the Local Government Association, BookTrust and CILIP. We also have letters of support from the CYP Mental Health Alliance.

## 9. Working in partnership with Arts Council England

As an IPSO, ASCEL will work in partnership with Arts Council England to support the libraries sector to deliver against its investment principles and strategic outcomes for children and young people. We will submit quarterly board papers to Arts Council England and understand that Arts Council England expects all IPSOs to participate in an annual progress review with the Chair of the Board and Chief Executive.

We would welcome Arts Council England's comments on the specification for the new Chief Executive and for additional board positions, including the development of a process for bringing in young trustees.

We have designed our new executive structure so that we are able to respond to ad-hoc requests from Arts Council England either for information on our activities or on sector activities relating to children and young people. This will form part of our partnership and stakeholder engagement strategy, ensuring that Arts Council England is informed of developments in the sector and has a full and detailed picture of how libraries are working with and for children and young people across England. In particular, we would welcome ACE's representation on the Children and Young People's Promise Alliance and attendance at meetings, subject to capacity.



## 10. Finance

Totals	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Notes
Income	£238,505.00	£245,005.00	£253,005.00	
Expenditure	£227,115.62	£238,664.74	£237,348.84	
Surplus	£11,389.38	£6,340.26	£15,656.16	Aim contingency of 5k to rebuild reserves
Income	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Notes
Arts Council - NPO	£200,000.00	£200,000.00	£200,000.00	
Earned income	£21,000.00	£ 21,000.00	£21,000.00	Conference fees
Contributed income	£15,000.00	£16,500.00	£17,000.00	Membership fees
Investment income	£5.00	£5.00	£5.00	Interest from savings account
Other income	£2,500	£7,500	£15,000	Anticipated grant awards etc.
<b>Total</b>	<b>£238,505.00</b>	<b>£245,005.00</b>	<b>£253,005.00</b>	
Expenditure	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Notes
Staff Costs				
Salaries	£99,400	£114,200	£114,200	
National Insurance	£11,538	£13,080	£13,080	5% increase
Pension Costs	£4,970	£5,710	£5,710	5% increase
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 115,907.58</b>	<b>£ 132,990.48</b>	<b>£ 132,990.48</b>	
Overheads				
Mortgage/rent	£7,250	£7,250	£7,250	
Rates	£3,038	£3,038	£3,038	

<b>Utilities</b>	£1,800	£1,800	£1,800	
<b>Insurance</b>	£1,000	£ 1,000	£1,000	
<b>Other office expenses</b>	£5,510	£4,931	£4,960	
<b>Advertising &amp; promotion</b>	£2,500	£3,500	£4,000	
<b>Travel &amp; staff expenses</b>	£12,000	£12,000	£12,000	Includes trustee expenses
<b>Consultants fees &amp; subscriptions</b>	£3,855	£1,355	£1,355	IFLA £1097.78 p/a Membership of chairs £55 p/a Other subscriptions/organisations £200
<b>Legal &amp; professional</b>	£9,948	£9,948	£9,948	22-23 £5,500 to £6,500 for Birketts 6k Administrative support 2.4k IT support
<b>Audit &amp; accountancy</b>	£5,235	£ 5,235	£5,235	£500 for audit £4,734.72 Bookkeeping, finance and payroll
<b>Access costs</b>	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	
<b>Training</b>	£3,000	£ 2,000	£ 1,000	
<b>Equipment purchase</b>	£5,000	£1,000	£1,000	3 x laptop and peripherals in 2021 - 22
<b>Bank fees &amp; charges</b>	£72	£72	£72	Allow £7 p/m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£61,208.04</b>	<b>£ 54,129.26</b>	<b>£ 53,658.04</b>	
<b>Direct activity costs</b>				
<b>Member training development and delivery</b>	£3,000	£ 5,000	£6,000	
<b>Commissioned research</b>	£ -	£8,000	£ -	
<b>Youth Engagement Network Evaluation</b>	£9,000	£3,000	£ -	
<b>Regional training budget</b>	£ -	£2,045	£2,700	
<b>HAF pilot</b>	£5,000	£ -	£ -	

<b>Youth Engagement Network Pilot site support</b>	£11,000.00	£11,500.00	£ -	
<b>Youth Engagement Network expenses ongoing</b>	£ -	£ -	£20,000.00	
<b>Childrens and Young People's Alliance</b>	£ 4,000.00	£4,000.00	£ 4,000.00	Management costs
<b>Conference</b>	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	£18,000.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£50,000.00</b>	<b>£51,545.00</b>	<b>£50,700.32</b>	

### *Financial management processes*

If we are successful in achieving Arts Council England IPSO funding, we will be managing a much larger budget than in the past as an organisation. We will put in place the following safeguards to ensure that our budget is managed and spent effectively:

- Experience of effectively managing budgets of similar size will be an essential criterion in the recruitment of the new Chief Executive Officer
- We will ensure that our Board of Trustees includes individuals with experience of managing large budgets on behalf of organisations, including charitable and government grants and will set up a finance sub-committee, led by the Chair of Trustees, which will provide governance review and support to the CEO in managing the budget
- Libraries Connected have offered to mentor ASCEL as we transition to a new governance and delivery structure and to IPSO status, and we will work closely with them at governance and executive levels to ensure that ASCEL puts in place effective budgetary management processes
- We will outsource bookkeeping and payroll to a specialist organisation with experience of supporting charities to maintain accurate records that comply with the requirements of the Charity Commission, which will ensure we have adequate specialist financial expertise. We will be able to consult our supplier on an ad-hoc basis should any financial issues arise over the course of the grant period.

## 11. Risk assessment

	Likelihood	Severity
Low	Unlikely to happen	Impact on delivery will be low
Medium	Possible but not likely	Delivery will be impacted, but not critically
High	Likely or very likely	Delivery will be severely impacted

### *ASCEL Operational risks*

Category	Risk	Likelihood/ severity	Mitigating actions
Resource/ operational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to recruit suitable staff</li> </ul>	Low/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an alternative resourcing plan using e.g. contract staff or interim staff while searching more widely</li> <li>Review job roles and salary and re-advertise</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No suitable office space is available in the Levelling Up Places</li> </ul>	Low/medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cast the net more widely in terms of e.g. commercial office space or other potential partner organisations with space to offer</li> <li>Consider home-working until office space can be found</li> </ul>
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unable to recruit a wide range of diverse trustees</li> </ul>	Low/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use both open advertisement and personal approach to potential trustees to make them aware of the opportunities and encourage application</li> <li>Begin with a smaller group of trustees and build incrementally year-on-year as ASCEL further develops its networks</li> </ul>
Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sector organisations are not able/interested in joining the CYP Promise Alliance</li> </ul>	Low/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have already approached most potential partner organisations to gauge their willingness to take part and they have expressed enthusiasm for the initiative.</li> <li>We will review partner views on the Alliance every 12-18 months with partners to understand their experiences of taking part and how these can be improved.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Engagement Network is unable to be established</li> </ul>	Medium/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with existing established groups rather than trying to build a group from scratch</li> <li>Look at working with existing networks if the bespoke library-led network does not gain interest or momentum</li> </ul>

Category	Risk	Likelihood/severity	Mitigating actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Youth Engagement Network is not successful in delivering positive outcomes for CYP</li> </ul>	Low/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design the network and its approach with young people to maximise benefits</li> <li>Look at existing good practice/principles for engagement and ensure these are followed</li> <li>Use a regular/constant feedback cycle to understand</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASCEL is not successful in positioning itself as a key partner for national initiatives to support CYP in libraries</li> </ul>	Low/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Chair will work with the CEO to identify reasons for ASCEL not being included and to engage stakeholders in constructive dialogue to achieve this aim.</li> </ul>
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is not sufficient budget to deliver against all of the activities in the business plan</li> </ul>	Medium/medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CEO and Chair will work together to supplement Arts Council England funding with additional project grant funding from other funders</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unsuccessful in achieving ACE funding</li> </ul>	Medium/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop project funding bids that will enable us to deliver our business plan and work with contracted staff to support this</li> </ul>

### Sector risks

Risk	Likelihood/severity	Mitigating actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library services cut their children's provision so that they are unable to deliver best practice</li> </ul>	Medium/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Libraries Connected, LGA and other national bodies to identify services at risk of losing CYP capability and deliver advocacy and planning support to avoid this</li> <li>Explore training and support that can benefit services with very limited CYP capabilities and resources</li> <li>As a last resort focus effort on services who are maintaining CYP capabilities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pilot youth engagement networks are unable to deliver due to staffing or other issues</li> </ul>	Medium/high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with evaluator to understand what factors support or make the networks harder to establish and engage</li> <li>Provide support and advice throughout the process to help pilot services identify new strategies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of attendance at training or conference</li> </ul>	Low/medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with national and regional ASCEL committees to ensure training topics are relevant and engaging and that the programme for the conference is compelling</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore options to gain funding for bursaries or subsidised conference attendance</li></ul>
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## Appendices

### A. Arts Council England IPSO Application text

#### Your organisation

##### **Describe your organisation or consortium, including your mission or purpose.**

ASCEL is the national network of senior managers in Children's, Public and Schools Library Services. We were founded by library staff to provide the specialist skills, partnerships and programmes needed to deliver excellent services for children and young people in public and school library services. We provide training, peer support, best practice and initiatives that develop and improve services. We have 166 individual members from 140 library services. Our registered office is in Halton and we provide information and support across the whole of England. We have 9 active regional committees which support place-based partnership working across the country.

ASCEL inspires all children and young people to reach their full potential by championing excellence, diversity and equality in libraries. Our vision is for the imagination and aspirations of all children and young people to soar through exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity, where their voices are heard, valued and reflected.

In August 2021 we worked with members to begin a process of transformation and have invested £50,000 in developing our organisation between 2021-23. We will be a registered charity by April 2023 which will enable us to build on our track record of delivering high quality programmes and initiatives and to provide a strong voice for children and young people in libraries.

Co-creation with children and young people is central to our organisational development plan. We have always championed the needs and aspirations of CYP, but our new vision and mission place the voice of the child and young person at the heart of our organisation's aims and objectives.

Partnerships underpin our ability to create impact and change as a small organisation. We have formal partnership agreements with a wide range of organisations, including Libraries Connected, The Reading Agency, the National Literacy Trust, BookTrust, the LGA and the Autism charity Dimensions. We are also part of the CYP Mental Health Coalition.

##### **Tell us about your organisation's track record in access and excellence in creativity and culture, and how that makes you well-placed to make a strong contribution to Let's Create.**

We reach all 171 library services in England through the Children and Young People's (CYP) Promise, a Universal Library Offer. We also support those leading and delivering School Library Services. Our primary audience is staff and volunteers working with and delivering services for CYP in libraries. All of our work is designed to ensure that all children and young people in England are able to experience exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity.



A survey of 99 members in 2018 found that their top priorities for ASCEL were for us to provide advocacy for the value of CYP library services (91%), best practice and training (66%) and to horizon scan for new developments that impact the sector (66%).

We collate and promote evidence of the impact of public and school library services. In 2019 we published the “Children’s Library Journey: Early Years”, which set out the evidence base for the importance of CYP library services. We are working with the National Literacy Trust to raise awareness of the importance of primary school library services. We also collate and provide evidence to ACE, DCMS and other bodies, forums and committees on the impact, reach and value of CYP and School Library Services.

We developed and lead the Children and Young People’s Promise, which draws attention to the service that children and young people should expect from public libraries. We published a Self Assessment Tool for library services to measure their children’s provision against the CYP Promise and mapped the CYP Promise and Children’s Library Journeys to the Arts Council England’s 7 Quality Principles for working with children and young people.

We work in partnership with Libraries Connected to ensure that the Children and Young People’s Promise is represented across all of the Universal Library Offers. For example, we advised on the development of the Reading Well for Children and the Young People’s Mental Health reading lists. We also received funding from Arts Council England to explore the potential for using their Seven Quality Principles to assess the impact of rhyme times on families. This project resulted in a toolkit to support high quality rhyme times, a key part of the Reading Offer.

ASCEL is committed to supporting diversity and inclusion in library services for CYP. We introduced Autism Friendly Libraries in partnership with Dimensions, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities. We work with Empathy Lab to deliver events and activities that promote empathy through reading and we sit on the selection panel for their books. We are also working with BookTrust to develop and pilot targeted gifting programmes for disadvantaged families across the library network.

We support and promote best practice in library services from early years to work with young people: as well as the many toolkits and self-evaluation tools we have created, we also helped guide the Principles for Working with Young People with The Reading Agency. ASCEL national committee members are Peer Reviewers for LGA and participated in early years peer reviews prior to the pandemic. We also have a formal partnership agreement in place with LGA to support their Early Years Strategy Framework and family hubs project.

ASCEL has a strong track record of promoting initiatives to engage and support parents and carers as well as CYP. We supported and promoted action research into the impact of rhyme times on maternal mental health and BookTrust’s BookBump initiative, supporting maternal wellbeing in pregnancy.



Our toolkits and initiatives are available to download for free on our website. We run an annual conference, which attracts 150 delegates per year from across the country and invites guest speakers including authors, academic and government experts and charities working with children to speak on themes from helping CYP shape their future, to how libraries can use reading for pleasure to help children recover from the impacts of the pandemic. We collect feedback on the quality of all our conference workshops, which score an average of over 4/5 from attendees. Qualitative feedback suggests that attendance at our conference can be transformational for library staff, providing a unique opportunity to develop specialist skills and network. Since 2020 our conference has been held online, which has increased attendance and we are continuing a hybrid approach for 2022.

ASCEL always used digital engagement methods to deliver training and information to members, due to our dispersed national network. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic we shifted all of our support and activities online, including our national conference. We also provided a range of support and advice for library services, in partnership with Libraries Connected, during the pandemic. These include: working with The Reading Agency and Libraries Connected to provide reading resources to support families during the pandemic; our “Keeping Children Safe Online” toolkit, informed by the expertise of the NSPCC, which covers topics that library staff highlighted as areas of concern for the families they work with; and on an Action Plan for Children and Young People’s wellbeing which was followed by a webinar held with health professionals to support good practice on the ground.

At present ASCEL is entirely volunteer-run, with 9 Regional Committees made up of members in that region who each elect a representative to sit on the National Committee. We have a Chair and Vice-Chair who lead the National Committee. All activities are devised and delivered by members with the support of expert partners and commissioned freelancers and contractors.

In 2018 we conducted a formal review of value to members, non-members, stakeholders and partners, as a pre-cursor to a programme of organisational development. The review examined our structure and membership model and recommended that we become a CIO to expand our delivery capacity and separate our governance and executive teams. We consulted with members to ensure they are supportive of the change and are now in the process of becoming a registered charity. We also commissioned Independent Mind to facilitate the development of an ambitious business plan for 2023-26. This involved developing a new vision and mission in collaboration with members, as well as working with our national committee to devise an ambitious programme of work with a focus on co-creation with young people and facilitating collaboration across sector organisations to support and advocate for CYP and school library services.

We have formal partnership agreements in place with Libraries Connected, BookTrust and CILIP and have a letter of support from the CYP Mental Health Alliance. We have consulted all of our key partners as part of our programme of transformation and they are all supportive of our vision, mission and planned activities for the next three years.

**Tell us about your governance arrangements and how you will effectively lead and manage the programme of activity that you propose.**



ASCEL is currently an unincorporated organisation with an elected Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and National Committee. The National Committee is made up of representatives from each of the 9 Regional Committees and a nominated member of the SLS-UK, which represents School Library Services. Every member is invited to join a regional committee for their area. The benefit of this structure is that it ensures our activities are truly representative of the needs and priorities of our members.

We are in the process of becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and recruiting a board of trustees to enable us to expand our delivery programme and separate our governance and executive activities. Half of the board will be made up of ASCEL members, including the Chair, who will become the Chair of Trustees, the Vice-Chair who will shadow the Chair, the Treasurer and three other Trustees drawn from our National Committee. The other half of the board will be made up of non-members with specific skills and/or interests in CYP services and libraries.

We conducted a review in July 2021 which found that, while we are a female-led organisation with strong representation LGBTQ+ and disabled representation and across the country, we lack ethnic diversity, both in terms of our membership and our leadership. We will address this in our governance and will be actively encouraging people from underrepresented backgrounds to apply to become ASCEL trustees and will put processes in place to support them when they join.

We plan to set up a youth trustee scheme by 2026, for young people aged 18-24, which will further increase the diversity and representation on our board. We will follow good practice guidelines in building our youth trustee representation. We are drawing up a safeguarding policy which will be reviewed by the board regularly as we work to centre the voice of children and young people in ASCEL.

We will put in place a Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, which will review our activities, governance, employment policies and engagement with CYP in relation to their inclusivity and encouragement of diversity. Our Chair will join the Association of Chairs and undertake their “Chair Essentials” training as well as specific training on how to build inclusive boards.

There will be a board Finance Working Group, led by the Treasurer, which will be responsible for ensuring we have responsible financial practices in place, are compliant with Charity Commission regulations for good financial governance and will oversee the Chief Executive as and when needed, especially in relation to reporting requirements for the IPSO grant. This group will also be responsible for ensuring that ASCEL is dynamic and able to explore new funding and revenue generation opportunities.

We will also have a “People and Culture” Working Group, which will oversee our commitment to ambition and quality and recruitment of staff and ensure that our organisation’s values are upheld and promoted in all aspects of our work. These have been devised in collaboration with ASCEL members and they are as follows: listening to and centring the voices of children and young people in the library sector; supporting the growth and development of members and staff at all levels via local and national networks, to ensure sector and organisational resilience; developing strong,



effective and trusted partnerships and collaborations with others; being a kind, listening and empathetic organisation; working to ensure we are a diverse and inclusive organisation; being knowledgeable and draw on best practice and expertise to deliver high quality support and training; ensuring that the work we do is always inclusive and has the widest possible benefits to ASCEL members and library services.

The board will have regular standing agenda items to discuss ASCEL's environmental responsibility and ways in which it can be improved. There will also be a regular agenda item on monitoring and impact, to ensure that we are accurately measuring our reach and impact. In the context of that discussion, the board will review the quarterly data that is collected as part of the Annual Survey as a tool to measure ambition and quality & relevance and inclusion and explore ways in which this can be improved.

The National Committee and Regional Committees will continue as Advisory Groups to the Board of Trustees. They will also play a key role in disseminating the organisation's strategy to members and consulting with members on any future developments. The Chair, Treasurer and Vice-Chair will continue to be elected by members. This will ensure we maintain inclusivity and relevance by retaining a strong link with local library services.

ASCEL members have been consulted about the changes to its governance structure and ambition to become an Investment Principles Support Organisation. Members strongly support ASCEL's strategic direction, including applying for IPSO status. Members emphasised the importance of inclusion and diversity in a strategy workshop held in January 2022.

To ensure we are able to effectively deliver our programme of activity, the board will recruit a Chief Executive Officer, a Programme Manager and an Engagement and Communications Manager. We have mapped out the responsibilities of each staff member against our delivery plan in our business plan and are confident that this will provide us with the capacity to deliver our objectives.

To support the transition to a CIO and ensure we are equipped to deliver effectively as an IPSO, Libraries Connected have offered to provide mentoring support to the Chair of Trustees and board, from their own Chair of Trustees, and to our new Chief Executive Officer from their current Chief Executive Officer. This will consist of regular conversations as well as ad-hoc advice via email and telephone when needed.

We will sub-contract finance, IT, office management and HR requirements to third-party organisations with a strong track record of delivering these services for small charities and membership organisations. This will allow us to scale up quickly when needed, e.g. if we secure new funding for activities and will provide best value-for-money as well as specialist expertise which would be difficult to secure for a small organisation such as ours. The Board will review these contracts every 3 months in the first year, and every 6 months in the following two years of the funding agreement to manage risk and ensure quality of service and adherence to regulations.

We have noted the requirement and will provide all board papers for review by ACE on a quarterly basis. We also note the requirement for the Chair of Trustees and Chief Executive to attend an annual review meeting with ACE and to complete the Annual Survey. The Chair will have ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all information is collected and submitted to ACE according to reporting deadlines.

**Please provide an outline of your organisation's plans for the three-year funding period, which sets out how these plans would support the sector in embedding the Investment Principles.**

With IPSO investment we will employ a CEO and two project managers so we can deliver greater impact for CYP and for library services that support them, with a focus on Inclusivity & Relevance and Ambition & Quality. Our CEO will have a strong track record of developing quality services in libraries for CYP, with knowledge of the national policy context and a commitment to our values, especially centring the voice of the child, diversity and inclusion. The project managers will have experience of delivering similar projects in a library or CYP organisation.

Our primary audience is library services, their staff & volunteers, and national organisations working in libraries and reading. However, we will build direct links with CYP via a new Engagement Network organised by local library services and organisations working with CYP, co-ordinated into a national network by ASCEL staff. This will enable us to bring the voice of CYP into national policy and initiatives and will ensure that the widest possible range of CYP and their families are able to benefit from services designed with and for them.

All plans set out below have been agreed with members and reflect their priorities for ASCEL. Our governance & oversight arrangements will maintain close links with the sector and members to ensure that we meet their expectations over time.

We will collect and share evidence to ensure our activities are meeting their objectives, including: digital engagement figures; surveys of ASCEL members and attendees at the ASCEL Conference; independent evaluation of CYP's experiences of the Library Engagement Network; and regular review with the CYP Alliance members. The ASCEL Board will review engagement targets and have oversight of all data collected to ensure our activities meet their aims.

We have mapped 7 key activities: 3 will promote inclusivity & relevance across the sector and 4 will ensure ambition & quality for CYP and School Library Services.

**Inclusivity and relevance:**

**1. Youth Library Engagement Network**

We will form a CYP Library Engagement Network across England, to represent the voices of CYP from Primary School age upwards, including those who identify as LGBTQ+, who are disabled and D/deaf and from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.



We will pilot approaches for engagement across a 9-site pilot in the year 2023-24 and roll out the full network in 2024-26. The pilot will prioritise Levelling Up for Culture places and will be co-designed with our regional working groups and local partner organisations. It will build on existing CYP engagement taking place in libraries. Each pilot location will receive a grant to support their activities. The pilot phase will be independently evaluated to inform best practice in rollout. We will refer to best practice from e.g. The National Youth Association, Young Voices Heard, and Cultural Education Partnerships and with other IPSOs who focus on CYP.

The purpose of this network will be to hear from CYP what excellent, vibrant and dynamic library services look like to them and ensure that our guidance and training for library services reflects this. It will provide opportunities for CYP to volunteer, build career pathways, co-design services in their locality and ensure that youth voices are centred in national policy debates. We will work with CYP to design ways for them to influence national policy in libraries and culture that feel rewarding and meaningful to them. A strong safeguarding policy, overseen by the Board, will ensure that CYP are protected & supported at all times.

During rollout we will work with partners e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award, National Citizen Service and Arts Award to accredit the Engagement Network. We will use learning from the pilot to work towards including young people in our own governance and in the governance of library National Portfolio Organisations.

By 2026, the CYP Library Engagement Network will span all 9 of the ASCEL regions in England and has at least 20 active groups. These will have contributed to our own organisational priorities and planning, priorities for development in library services where they are based and across the wider sector. The voices of CYP in these groups will have influenced local and national decision-makers. The Network will strengthen libraries' ability to deliver services to meet community need and deliver against key priorities e.g. participation, employment/skills and wellbeing, especially in Levelling Up places.

## **2. Supporting families experiencing disadvantage**

The HAF programme is an important strategic initiative that reaches families experiencing disadvantage. We will develop a pilot "train the trainer" model to equip library staff to advocate for reading and literacy as a core element of HAF delivery and support HAF workers to engage families with library-led reading interventions (e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Rhyme Times etc.) and support the home learning environment. We will also work with LGA on strategic interventions e.g. Family Hubs, which promote the role of libraries in delivering family learning and early years support and with BookTrust on the rollout of their targeted book gifting programmes via public libraries.

## **3. Career pathways & skills mapping**



We have identified the loss of specialist CYP library staff over the past 10 years as a threat to the sector which we want to address. We will engage with CILIP and Local Cultural Education Partnerships to ensure the CYP Library Engagement Network supports access into library and other creative professions for a diverse range of young people. We will also work with CILIP to map professional development pathways for specialist Children's and Young People staff working in libraries to support retention of specialist expertise.

Staff and volunteers in modern library services need specific skills to ensure all CYP and families are welcomed and have a positive experience. We will engage with CYP, families and the sector, conduct research and analyse what skills are needed to support children and families in a modern public library service, drawing on training and development from across the children's sector. This will support relevance and inclusivity across libraries and support/inform our training plans.

## **Ambition and Quality**

### **1. Children and Young People's Promise Alliance**

The DCMS Youth Review highlighted the need for greater co-ordination in services for young people. We will co-convene a Children and Young People's Promise Alliance together with Libraries Connected to provide a forum for exchange, co-ordination and evidence gathering which will strengthen this Universal Library Offer. We have approached the LGA, Reading Agency, Booktrust, National Literacy Trust and CILIP and all have agreed to participate. The Alliance will share information, co-ordinate activities and campaigns, and amplify each other's initiatives and achievements. It will also enable sharing of data about CYP and the sector to help make the case for investment and measure impact.

We will bring the voice of the CYP Engagement Network to the Alliance so that CYP's voices have a greater impact on national organisations working in reading and libraries. Alliance members will help identify gaps in the CYP offer and ways in which these can be addressed. We will also work with Alliance members and the CYP Network to identify and widely promote good and emergent practice across a range of areas of children's and young people's services in libraries.

The Alliance will map and publish a synthesis of existing evidence about the value of CYP and Schools Library Services, followed by work together with ASCEL National Committee to scope new research where evidence gaps have been identified.

### **2. Impact research**

We will commission independent research to understand impact and build the case for children and young people's activities in libraries, in collaboration with our National Committee and informed by evidence gaps identified by the Alliance.

This could include SROI analysis as well as qualitative and quantitative evidence of impact. We will make this research available to library services and Alliance partners to make the case for investment in CYP library services and ensure that new interventions are targeted around what



works. We will use the findings from this research with national policy and decision-makers to raise the profile of CYP library services and establish a common understanding of their value. We will create a toolkit for ASCEL members and provide a webinar on engaging with impact evidence and making the case for CYP and Schools Library Services.

### **3. Training and skills development for library staff**

Following on from the skills mapping, we will provide new high-quality training to our member library services on topics identified in collaboration with the sector, CYP and national organisations. Future topics will have a focus on inclusivity and relevance, especially on engaging CYP who do not use libraries or who may require access support to do so. The training will also help libraries to contribute to a wide range of priorities including health & wellbeing, education & skills and levelling up. We will use online interactive delivery methods to ensure that the widest possible range of staff and volunteers are able to attend and will ensure access requirements are met.

### **4. Stakeholder engagement to raise the profile of the CYP library offer**

ASCEL will challenge other Universal Library Offers to support and engage CYP with evidence from our own research and the voice of the CYP Network. Bringing together the activities set out above, we will raise the profile of CYP and Schools Library services with a range of national and regional stakeholders, using robust research and the voice of CYP to make the case for support. We will judge our success by ASCEL's inclusion in strategic initiatives and views of members & stakeholders about improvements in the profile of CYP and Schools Library Services.

## **B. Investment Principles action plan**

(see separate document)