

# Inclusive Libraries 2024: talking points

The theme of the first Inclusive Libraries conference looked at race and culture, and how we can support young users of the library to explore these themes, as well as celebrate libraries as places of sanctuary and unity.

We've created this collection of talking points so that you can continue the conversation and share the learnings back in your settings. If you weren't able to attend the conference we recommend watching the recordings of the keynote speeches and panel discussion, then using these talking points as a starting guide to discussing the content with your colleagues in a staff meeting, picking one or more of the most relevant considerations for your library service.

Conversations around racism can be triggering, especially for those with lived experience of prejudice, so do approach sensitively, and take care of yourselves and each other as you explore these topics.

## Identity

In Jeffrey Boakye's keynote speech he spoke about everyone having an individual pie chart, of the prevailing 'segments' that make up their identity. Draw up your own identity pie chart. If you are comfortable sharing it/ parts of it with your colleagues do so.

What powerful insights do you have about the world that people don't know of?  
What can you use in your own library?

Think about/discuss the identity pie chart that a hypothetical patron to your specific library might have. What are some of the best ways that your library is reaching them?

What are some of the main sectors of your library community? Think about your identity pie chart and try to draw up one for your library as if it were a person!

## Events and activities

In Nazneen Ahmed Pathak's keynote speech she talks about her residency at Southampton Library, and the different activities she led there. What events could you/are you already holding that include and serve your diverse community?

In the panel discussion, Sarah Smith shared how Brent Libraries decided to deliver Storytimes in a different language to reach a disengaged portion of their clientele. Your library will hold various events in its multifunctional capacity. In what ways are different parts of your community being seen and catered to?

Are there groups within your larger clientele who have low levels of engagement with your library and various offers? Can you identify these gaps and then consider ways in which you can be easier to reach by these groups?

What could be/are barriers to organising, holding, sustaining these events and activities. How could these/have these been overcome?

Think about the creativity that people already have in their lives, as well as what matters to them. Are there ways this can be combined to form activities/events that are inclusive and serve the needs of your library's community? E.g. Nazneen spoke about using sewing, crafts, talking and connecting to design a craft-making activity to connect and welcome women into the library.

## Book stock

In the panel discussion, Matthew Stoppard from Leeds Libraries spoke about the book specification the library service provides their book supplier, and the clause that they have built into their particular specification for the supplier to include a proportion of diverse and inclusive titles.

Your library's book stock is a determining factor in how inclusive your library is. In your library who manages the relationship with your supplier and how collaborative is the decision about the titles included?

Is there a way you can ensure that your stock specification stipulates a more diverse and inclusive supply of material?

If the supply isn't diverse enough is there a way of feeding that back to your supplier and working towards diversifying? Are there other ways you can diversify your stock?

Traditional suppliers may not be able to meet all requirements that fulfil the needs of a truly inclusive catalogue. In cases such as these, consider wider library

networks or specialist stockists who can meet your needs. Who are they and what can be done to identify them if they are not already on the radar?

In one of the workshops from the day, delegates and booksellers spoke about 'classic' books and what place they hold in a modern, inclusive library. Many said that they would include classics in the library collection, but use a system of positive gatekeeping where books will have information about the challenging/triggering content they may contain in order for the reader to make the decision about whether to proceed with the book.

Can we challenge the way we think about classics, for example to make the category more inclusive?

How in your libraries, can we redefine what a 'classic read' might be and how do we ensure contemporary voices sit alongside the old favourites? How can we share older books in mindful ways, while avoiding censorship?

Consider the sometimes-hidden histories of the area your library serves (e.g. the middle class of Black Tudors in London, the Chinese community in Edwardian-era Limehouse). Is this tied to the lives of those who still reside in the area? Is there a way to source material/titles or even objects, so that you hold a healthy amount of stock, including fiction, that reflects the stories of individuals whose stories have been more commonly erased?

This can include physical paraphernalia that contain stories. For instance, Nazneen Ahmed Pathak referred to members of the community contributing their own stories and personal objects to their craft project. The British Library's session on Windrush also referenced object collections, and how the community itself can lend relevant.

Think back to the identity pie activity. You may not be aware of what valuable resources your patrons are/could be able to provide. Could you hold community consultations which are open to residents and library users to gauge the broad diversity of backgrounds they comprise, and how they would like this to be served by the library?

### ***The Libraries that made me: a celebration activity.***

"Libraries are a treasure chest of refuge and escape" (Nazneen Ahmed Pathak)  
They have multiple functions where users can discover and develop their passions and reading journeys.

What are the libraries that have made you? Can you celebrate this with a map, or river, or flow chart?