



North Harrow Community Library

Redesigning the children's library to create a bright, modern space for the local community.

North Harrow Library has been a valued local resource since the 1980s. Although it closed in 2015, it was reopened by volunteers in 2018 to run as a community library, continuing to serve as a hub for reading, learning and local activities. However, while the library remained well used and much loved, the children's area had seen little change since the building first opened.

With a sizeable grant secured from the Local Authority, the library team saw an opportunity to transform the children's space into something brighter, more engaging and better

suited to the needs of today's families whilst retaining the flexibility required for the library's busy programme of community activities.

BookSpace was appointed to redesign the children's area in order to modernise the space, improve accessibility and create a more welcoming environment for young readers and their carers.

The brief

The shelving units in the children's area had not been updated since the library was opened. Bookcases were too tall for children to access independently and most of the books were displayed spine-out, making them less appealing for young readers.

BookSpace

As a busy community library, the children's area needed to function as a flexible event space. Regular activities such as Rhyme Time and sound bath meditation sessions require open floor space, yet the heavy shelving units were difficult to move each week.

Having visited children's libraries elsewhere, the library team felt their space looked dated. They wanted to create an area that would better engage young children, encourage browsing and feel welcoming to everyone who visited.

Their key objectives were clear:

- Create a modern, light and welcoming space
- Introduce forward-facing display for picturebooks
- Ensure all shelving was low enough for children to access independently
- Make mid-floor furniture movable to create a flexible open space
- Provide practical storage for toys and puzzles



The solution

After discovering BookSpace online and being impressed by both the **library furniture range** and **customer reviews**, Kamal Shah (Chair of Trustees) contacted the design team to arrange a free site visit to discuss the project further.

"We met with the designer, Jonathan, and were very impressed with his enthusiasm and suggestions so were keen to go along with him. We did, however, get a second quote to have a comparison but didn't feel the other company was as interesting or interested. Ultimately, we loved the look and feel of the bookshelves and furniture, the quote was reasonable and we felt we would be well looked after." explains Kamal.

Working closely with Jonathan, the final design reflected both the library's operational needs and its role in the community.



The proposal included:

Low-level, forward-facing bookcases

Picturebooks are now displayed face-out, making covers visible and inviting for children. This simple change has transformed the browsing experience, encouraging engagement and removing the need for strict alphabetical ordering. The lower height ensures children can independently select and return books.

Comfortable, child-friendly seating

Bean bags and stools provide cosy reading spots for children, while thoughtfully positioned seating allows carers to sit comfortably alongside them. The space now supports shared reading as well as independent exploration.

Mid-floor mobile shelving

Mid-floor units were fitted with castors or fabric sliders, allowing staff and volunteers to easily reconfigure the space. Shelving can now be moved aside quickly to create an open central area for community events.

"The installation phase went remarkably smoothly. The installers arrived when they said they would and worked until it was finished. They were helpful, accommodating and tidy."

Kamal Shah, Chair of Trustees

Integrated storage solutions

Dedicated **storage units** were incorporated to house toys and puzzles neatly. This has made end-of-day tidying far simpler and keeps the space looking organised and welcoming.



In addition to the above solutions, the design also incorporated a number of engaging features to further enhance the children's library. The feature wall integrates BookSpace's signature tree motifs alongside the library's logo, creating a cohesive design that reflects and strengthens the library's identity.

Elsewhere, wall graphics display key words such as "Welcoming", "Inclusive", "Helpful" and "Community",

reflecting the library's values and helping to create a positive, inviting environment for children and families.

The library also includes a dedicated sensory wall featuring a **Sensory Tree**, **Sequin Frame**, **Grass Frame** and a **Bubble Mirror**. These tactile and reflective displays encourage hands-on exploration and support visual and sensory development, adding an interactive element that makes the space both stimulating and inclusive for young visitors.



Summary

The furniture installation took place in September 2025 and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly regarding the colour scheme, improved layout and the flexibility of the furniture.

"Everyone who has visited the children's area has loved it. The **Cube Seats** and **Bean Bags** are great for the children to sit and read to themselves. We've had a lot of comments on the colour scheme, all positive, and the fact that all the furniture is movable has made the space much more usable," says Kamal. "The volunteers are more inclined to spend time tidying and ensuring the area is looked after now that it's an attractive space"



**At BookSpace we love helping to design reading spaces no matter how large or small.
Contact our friendly team on 0121 246 2777 to find out more.**