



Innovation and Development Fund

Final Project Report

Section 1

Project Title

What is the title of your project?	Effective service delivery to homebound library users
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Project Partners

Who is the lead organisation?	Falkirk Council Library Services
Please provide contact details for the lead organisation (name, address, telephone and email)	Falkirk Council Library Service Library Support Victoria Buildings, Queen Street, Falkirk, FK2 7AF Tel: 01324 506800 e-mail: gil.vick@falkirk.gov.uk
Who is the project manager (name, organisation, address, telephone and email)?	Gil Vick, Principal Librarian, Support Services Victoria Buildings, Queen Street, Falkirk, FK2 7AF Tel: 01324 506804 e-mail: gil.vick@falkirk.gov.uk
Who are the other project partners?	DS Ltd. Finance Services

Project description

<p>Please give a brief description of your project (no more than 150 words).</p>	<p>To give Homebound users access to the resources of the Library Service via the web-based catalogue using laptop computers and mobile phone technology. Library Assistants delivering the Homebound Service would have the laptop and mobile phones in order to assist users in making constructive use of the catalogue search options, placing request, viewing their lone history and renewing loans during the home visit. Access to on-line reviews and associated services would also be made available.</p>
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Amount of Award

<p>How much was awarded from the Innovation and Development Fund?</p>	<p>£7727</p>
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Section 2

This section should be narrative text between 1500 and 2500 words

Effective service delivery to homebound library users

In 2004 Falkirk Council Library service undertook a Best Value Review of the Homebound Service. The Service is very well used, with over 400 individual clients plus a number of homes and sheltered housing complexes. The Service runs every afternoon with two vans, one staffed by a dedicated lone Homebound Assistant and one staffed by a driver and an assistant from one of the libraries. The trigger for the BVR was a need to address manual handling issues for the staff and improvements in the service for the users.

As a result of the BVR, it was decided to change the system of delivery from one where a selection of books was taken to each user, from which they could choose. This involved the assistant carrying two heavy wire baskets with books tailored to the user's requirements in terms of large print, romance, non-fiction etc. The system was cumbersome and time consuming as time had to be allowed for the user to look through the selection to choose the books they wanted and had major manual handling issues for staff.

After a great deal of research and consultation, it was decided to change the delivery method to a pre-selected bag of books which is delivered and left with the user until the next visit. Where the client is a heavy reader more than one bag can be provided. The service is also being devolved to the library in each area in order to provide a closer link with the local library for the users. The clients are all visited to produce an up to date profile of their wants and this can be revised at any time.

We were concerned to find ways in which we could enhance the service to the Homebound users in an attempt to provide a more inclusive service with at least some of the choice that is available in the static libraries. The opportunity to bid for funding from the Innovation and Development Fund offered the possibility of providing that enhancement by taking the online catalogue to the users in their homes. This would address our concerns about the lack of choice if the books were pre-selected for borrowers. It would also make better use of the full stock of Falkirk Library Service.

Using the online borrower details at the point of delivery would provide a means of making immediate requests for books and checking borrower's current loan status.

In addition the laptops could also be used to provide enhanced Reader Development opportunities.

Project Aims and Objectives

Aim: "To improve physical and remote access to library services." (Service Plan 2005.)

Objectives:

- (We will do this by.....) "...offering the full range of library services to homebound readers by 31/3/06." (Service Plan 2005.)
- Meeting the Homebound users needs more precisely
- Create an accessible and portable database of items borrowed and requested using laptop technology in each centre of operation.
- Increase the potential for interaction between service users and deliverers.
- Develop access to reader development activities for homebound users.
- Increased stock exploitation

Summary of Outputs and Outcomes

The Homebound users have a far wider choice of material available to them

Staff can provide a better service in terms of matching users' requirements using not just the library catalogue but other bibliographical sources.

Requests can be placed immediately, giving the borrower the satisfaction that their needs are being addressed.

Progress of requests can be checked and alternatives offered if a title is not available.

Staff have gained the facility to offer a far better service to their users and to use their ICT training in a practical way, as well as using their Reader Development training.

Methodology

We bid for funding to buy six laptops and appropriate software, one for each of the five libraries which staff the Homebound and one for the service provided out of Library Support. Matched funding purchased six mobile phones with a Bluetooth connection which gives us good coverage in this area and covers the running costs for the internet connection. The laptops were configured by DS, our LMS supplier, to run the public access software. The Homebound assistant takes the laptop out on the run and can use it to access the library catalogue, search for particular titles and request them for the borrower. We have added useful websites to the favourites. These include Ulverscroft and BBC Books in order to check for large print and spoken word material that we may not have in stock, www.whichbook.net for the reader who doesn't know what they want, the RNIB website for information and various bibliographic sites. Books are now issued to the reader's ticket in the library before delivery so that the assistant can also check what books they currently have for them.

The borrower history has been turned on for this category of user which means that if a title is issued a second time staff are alerted immediately and the reader does not get the same book again unless it is requested.

Appraisal of project in terms of service and professional practice enhancement

As the provision of the laptops is an add-on to major changes within the service, the roll-out has been slower than we had hoped. Providing the service from individual libraries has meant changes in their way of working, provision of space to make up and store the bags and some staff training. The libraries currently providing the new service have also put in a great deal of work in providing leaflets and book lists in order to ensure that users get the best choice possible in the limited circumstances. As the laptops are brought into use, this can only enhance the choice we can offer and bring our Homebound users closer to the level of service provided in the libraries.

Staff feel that they are now able to provide a service which is closer to the standard of service provided by the static libraries, giving them more pride in the work they are doing and the opportunity to exercise their undoubted skills in reader development and customer service.

We hope that possible future developments in the enhancement of the catalogue with jacket images and audio clips will add to a greater sense of inclusion.

Lessons for other services' developments

The project used known and tested technology to provide a successful outcome

Staff were already very confident in using technology and have taken this on board as part of their normal work practices.

As the project was part of a larger change in service delivery, considerable consultation with borrowers and staff had already been done to provide a foundation for this enhancement.

Publications

Information Scotland : June 2006, p 9

Grangemouth Advertiser, May 3rd 2006., p 6

Falkirk Council, Community Services Newsletter. July 2005, p 4

Section 3

Milestones

Please list the milestones agreed as condition of grant and report progress against them		
Milestone	Progress	Remedial action if required
Laptops acquired & set up by DS	Completed	
Mobile phones acquired	Completed	
Test usage in one library	Completed	
Staff training	Falkirk Library, Library Support staff completed	
Rollout service as new Homebound service is implemented	Falkirk Library, Library Support Other libraries in process of changing to the new system	
Statistical reporting	Recording being tested by Grangemouth Library	Roll out to Falkirk Library

Problems and solutions

Please list any problems encountered and the solutions to them		
Problems	Solutions	Notes
Slower progress than originally anticipated as the service is being changed radically and there have been some issues of space.	Laptops will be in place in each library shortly as the new service delivery is put in place	

Project costs

Please list expenditure related to SLIC funding to date		
Item	Cost	
6 laptops, software and installation	7636.20	
Delivery	£90.00	

Dissemination

<p>SLIC will disseminate reports from your project through its website.</p> <p>SLIC will also require a follow-up report about the impact of your project between 12 and 24 months after the funding period.</p> <p>What support is the project providing for dissemination of the lessons learned from the project to the wider sector?</p>	
In what publications has the project presented its lessons to?	Information Scotland
What websites has the project presented its lessons to?	
What mailing lists has the project presented its lessons to?	
What seminars has the project presented its lessons to?	SLIC IDF Showcase
What conferences has the project presented its lessons to?	
Are there other dissemination routes the project will use or has used?	

Declaration

<p>The information provided in this interim report is correct to the best of my knowledge</p>			
Name	Gil Vick	Signature	
Position	Principal Librarian (Support Services)	Date	