

2007-08

East Dunbartonshire Council evaluation report

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLOIM)

Summary

From detailed discussions with staff, stakeholders and users, visits to libraries and a review of the evidence, it is clear that East Dunbartonshire Library Service staff are working hard to ensure a range of quality library services are delivered across the authority and, in particular to vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. The service has already taken part in self evaluation processes but using the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) has focused attention on the delivery and effectiveness of information services to the public as well as looking at ethos and values.

The services offered have important strengths which are having a positive impact and this is clearly evidenced in the feedback from the public. In both indicators there is a high but achievable standard of provision. The range of information services available to residents in a small local authority area is very good. Specialist staff are well-trained, knowledgeable and keen to share their enthusiasm for subjects and online sources with the public.

There is a range of staff training, especially in ICT skills and digital skills. This has enabled staff to carry out extensive work on Council website information and to carry out extensive research into Scottish Council website taxonomies. The East Dunbartonshire Council's Information Management Group is led by library staff.

Staff committed to the ethos and values of the service, laid out clearly in the Vision, Values and Aims documentation. The Customer Care Charter is a very good example. It is clear that further work is required to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the ethos and values. However as reflected by the weight of positive customer feedback this does not appear to affect the experiences of individuals.

Key strengths in Access to Information include the range of information resources, commitment to 24/7 access and Teen Healthy Reading. The other quality indicator reviewed, Ethos and Values, has key strengths including developing and improving services for specific user groups, the annual staff survey and the Customer Care Charter.

As part of the PLQIM, staff identified a number of areas for improvement and this will form the basis of an action plan on which to build better services.

Introduction

Sited in all types of communities and with extensive mobile library service provision, libraries remain one of the free universal services in communities where the local population can visit as individuals or in groups to pursue reading for pleasure, learning or hobbies. Libraries can support the business community, individual and community information needs and are inclusive of all age and social groups, nationalities, genders and religious beliefs. The delivery of high quality information and library services to individuals and communities helps people to develop their skills, realise their aspirations and contributes to the economic growth and well being of the country. Libraries encourage the use of digital technologies by communities and individuals providing access to information, learning and culture.

The first public library legislation in Scotland was passed in 1853 and the base legislation is the 1887 Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act, so local authorities have a statutory duty to secure the provision of adequate library services for all persons resident in their area. Library services make a significant contribution

to delivering the Scottish Government's five strategic priorities, as well as local council and community planning objectives.

Local Authority background

East Dunbartonshire Council serves a small area on the outskirts of Glasgow in the Central Lowlands. It covers a 17,182 sq km area and has a population of approximately 105,500. Over 75% of the land is used for farming but a high percentage of the population commute to Glasgow and other areas for employment.

The library service has 8 branches¹, 1 mobile library and a housebound service. The longest opening hours is 54 hours per week and 4 libraries are open between 45 and 59 hours per week. The William Patrick Library is the service's busiest service point with 180,192 book loans in 2006/7 and over 133,852 visits. The workforce is 62.8 FTE, with 17 professional staff and staff per 1000 population ranks 14th in Scottish tables. Audit Scotland's 2005/6² report points out that performance declined under the statutory performance indicator - the percentage of the resident population who are borrowers from public libraries. However, performance was slightly above the Scottish average. The Audit Scotland Cultural and Community Services Performance Indicators 2006/7 show improvements in meeting national targets for replenishing stock for both adults and children, declining use of learning centres and numbers of visits to libraries.

Process

Using the Public Library Quality Improvement Framework, library service staff were encouraged to identify and collect evidence. Staff were assisted by a member of the Performance and Planning team who joined in the discussions.

Presentations were made to staff on 7th February 2008 and this was followed by lengthy discussions with the library management team and a large group of staff from across the service points. Contributions to the evidence were made by a visually impaired reading group. Visits to Bishopbriggs Library and the William Patrick Library in Kirkintilloch were made. A follow up visit talk to users and observe practice took place on 19th February 2008. Following discussions with senior staff, a visit was made to observe a storytime and reading activity guiding primary 6 and 7s at Lairdland Primary school in Kirkintilloch on effective reading aloud to younger children. This was followed by discussions about the contribution of the library services to their work with a group from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information

Strengths

- Wide range of online and print collections
- 24/7 access
- Wide range of information to support communities and individuals
- Information Audit
- Teen Healthy Reading
- 4 branded learndirect Scotland learning suites
- Mobile Classroom for learning and other projects

¹ CIPFA Public Library Statistics Actuals 2006/7

² www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/docs/local/2005/fa_0506_east_dunbartonshire.pdf

Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources

East Dunbartonshire Libraries have a central Information and Local Studies Service, part of Information and Archives, located at the William Patrick Library in Kirkintilloch. A team of three manage collections; provide support and taster sessions for the public, and respond to the majority of the information and local studies enquiries. Every community library has a small reference collection which enables staff to provide basic information service. As well as the main collection in the William Patrick Library, local studies collections focusing on their areas are located at Bishopbriggs Library, Milngavie Library and Brookwood Library in Bearsden. The Stock Collection Policy is clearly details how reference tools are selected and acquired. Suggestions for information books are made and items which have not been used and obsolete items are withdrawn regularly.

Online subscription services are available 24/7 from the library section of the Council website and resources offered to support public information needs by a small authority are very good. They include Encyclopedia Britannica, KnowUK (UK-specific general reference information), NewsUK (wide range of national and local newspapers), Credo (world publisher's reference information), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and Issues (social and contemporary issues). Usage levels low but services are consistently accessed. Online services provide equity of access across the authority and to wider and more current information sources than could be afforded in print but usage levels require sustained promotion. Continued subscriptions must be within the context of service change. The service carried out a review of Information and Local Studies services in 2005 and the Management of Change document provides a useful benchmark for comparison and informing decision making. Information audits are carried out across the service to analyse the information services accessed locally, enable staff and the public to make better use of information sources and to avoid inefficiencies and duplication. Using online services in enquiry work was encouraged and ways in which online services could be promoted were identified. East Dunbartonshire has a range of good onsite promotional materials and access is available through the Council website. The online resources are integrated into taster sessions.

As a result of the information audit, some annual publications have been cancelled and print reference materials and quantities of leaflets have been reduced in community libraries. Community information leaflets on subjects such as consumer advice, law, local information, health, money, Government and transport are available, as is information for specific groups such as senior citizens, the visually impaired and parents, children and families. The website has links to a wide range of information providers and community and local groups.

An information leaflet for business users identifies the range of sources provided for them – free internet access, printed guides, recommended websites and online subscription services including Kompass the business specialist information service. Printed business resources include a variety of directories, a selection of books on business related topics and leaflets of interest on taxations, health, law and the environment. Information and Archives at the William Patrick Library provides access to a range of print materials from the European parliament and is a Scottish Parliament partner library. There is a national downwards trend in demand for access to the printed materials, as web access is readily available, but these services are maintained with good visibility.

Access is also provided to the Scottish interest services of SCRAN (cultural resources) and the Statistical Accounts of Scotland. ScotlandsPeople, the official genealogical website managed by the partnership of the General Register Office for Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and the Court of the Lord Lyon, recently developed a library partnership, offering training for staff and a special voucher discount to allow staff and the public to familiarize themselves with the website. The William Patrick Library and Brookwood Library took part in a pilot project and all staff at both locations received basic training in using the website with customers. Prior to the public launch of the scheme, a taster session was developed for the family history students and publicity was prepared and circulated. A total of 40 attended and the taster session has been added to the family history courses which the library service was already running. The 1 hour long taster sessions continued after the initial session, attracting about 120 participants. The feedback to the library staff was generally positive and staff were able to pass on useful information about accessibility problems and technical issues to the General Register Office for Scotland, who run the website. The scheme is being rolled out across Scotland and volunteers to pilot such schemes are vital to enable service development.

Considerable time is taken to identify suitable ranges of resources for user groups and to make information on special interest collections available. Examples range from the catalogue of the James F McEwan transport history collection, resource lists to support school projects, and the reading lists to support special events. There are now a number of Books on Prescription, Healthy Reading and Bibliotherapy initiatives in Scottish public libraries. These schemes work in a partnership between GPs and libraries providing access to information and reading on managing mild to moderate emotional problems, such as dealing with stress, anxiety and depression. East Dunbartonshire has a successful scheme in place for adults and this has now been extended for teenagers and covers relationships, bullying and self-esteem. Teen Healthy Reading is a partnership of public and school libraries and the Youth Health Development Team of the East Dunbartonshire Community Health Partnership.

Arrangements for access

As well as 8 community libraries, East Dunbartonshire Council has 1 mobile library and a housebound service. Details of services are contained on the council website and in the pack for users, *What can we do for you today?* The mobile library timetable and details of opening hours are on the council website. The library service uses the Dynix Horizon Library Management System, which is part of the CAIRNS (Co-operative Information Retrieval service for Scotland) which offers a single-search point for many of Scotland's library catalogues, aiding information supply and resource location. Users can check and update their records, search for items held in East Dunbartonshire or, using CAIRNS, other libraries and request items. East Dunbartonshire Council is working within the national initiative to introduce the National Entitlement Card.

All libraries have 2Mb access and half of the library computers were replaced in 2007/8. There are 72 computers, 3 standalone in Young People's Services and 10 online public access catalogues. The network uses firewall has a Serendipity category list, agreed by the service and the newest version of DeepFreeze to protect computers. The service's Internet Access and Email Policy and Acceptable Use Policy are on the website. A range of provision for different groups, including the visually impaired and minority ethnic groups are one of the areas for improvement which staff will address in the next Development Plan. Fault calls are logged with the

helpdesk and the People's Network Officer can access the database of reported calls, allowing the library service to prioritise faults. 4 libraries have learning suites for class use and these have achieved learndirect quality branding. Access can be further extended by use of the mobile classroom, which uses a data-projector, 6 laptops and printers and Vodafone 3G/GPRS cards for internet connectivity.

Eager to extend the range of 24/7 services, the library service promotes the use of the online library catalogue and online learning courses by providing remote access. Membership forms are available online for customer convenience. Use of the online subscription services is promoted in a variety of different ways – a credit-card sized fold-out leaflet, standard information leaflets, on posters displayed in libraries, through the council website and in taster sessions. The public can use the iCam booking system to book computers in advance.

A range of course is offered to encourage citizens to improve their ICT skills. These include basic PC, email and Internet use and online learning courses. Assistive technology is provided for those users who require additional help with access. These include electronic magnifiers, Dolphin software and software which uses voice to read the computer screen.

Enquiry statistics are reviewed for each community library and staff proactively gather public information, in anticipation of future information needs. A framework for successful partnership events such as the Health Information Day has been developed. Other providers include transport information, access, pension advice and access to childcare information. Provision is monitored and evaluated through local Performance Indicators, public feedback, annual customer survey and the corporate *Have your Say* policy.

Staff interaction and support

Staff provide mediated support to those seeking information and those requiring support in the use of ICT. Training took place, as part of the People's Network roll-out. Staff training is reviewed and provided annually through the Performance, Management and Development Planning process.

The Library Service is a key partner in information management within the Council and has an important role in the development of the Council website. East Dunbartonshire Council has recently been a key partner in the Improvement Service's work on the development of subject information on Council websites, researching taxonomies.

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values

Strengths

- Developing and improving services for specific user groups
- Annual staff survey
- Systematic evaluation of library services and events
- Customer Care Charter

Sense of identity

The Library Service supports Community Planning and the wider Council and national aims and objectives around inclusion, equality and fairness. This is demonstrated by partnership work with a variety of groups, services and external agencies. All policy development follows the corporate framework for policy development in East

Dunbartonshire Council. The Service Development Plan sets out the range of charters and frameworks to support services for individuals and groups. Whilst the Vision, Values and Aims for the service reflects the aspiration to *'promote inclusive, proactive, successful and sustainable communities...by...providing a supportive and stimulating environment which encourage reading, information and learning'*, managers recognise that more work can be done to embed ethos and values of the service with staff. However it must be stressed that the positive customer feedback, which is evident from systematic collection and evaluation, in no way suggests that the experiences of individuals have been affected by the intention to work further in this area.

Senior managers lead the work to identify individuals and groups at risk of exclusion and approach relevant services and organisation to develop provision which meets the needs of those identified. Provision is tailored to suit the needs of individuals, staff take care to assess and review services. One example is the Visually Impaired Readers group where members are fully involved in assessing a range of different devices to open up their reading choices and opportunities are also taken to discuss wider lifestyle needs which can be met by Council and community partners, such as transport. Key partnerships include East Dunbartonshire Campus of Further and Higher Education (formal partnership to provide library facilities for students in Kirkintilloch), Social Work Outreach team (visually impaired, those with learning needs and older people, including the housebound), Community Health and Social Care Partnership (the Healthy Reading and Teen Healthy Reading initiatives) and Adult Literacy and Numeracy team (ESOL and BBC RaW). The service also works with children and young people within the Children's Services Plan, provides information in large print and ethnic languages sometimes through Language Line (the corporate interpreting service) and has customised guidelines for class visits which matches visit outcomes to the curriculum for Education Services.

Consultation and reporting is wide-ranging. Consultation with stakeholders includes the annual customer survey, the CIPFA Public Library User Survey (PLUS) for children and staff are asked complete an annual staff which explores their view of the service. The Annual Staff Survey, which has been running for a number of years, is a good management tool for assessing training needs and for monitoring changing staff attitudes to employee involvement, team working, equal opportunities and communication. Improvement or deterioration across the survey areas are reported to the senior management team and action taken. Performance management is carried out based on the corporate framework, which includes 6 monthly reports to elected members and senior officers, quarterly reports to Learning and Development the Community Planning themed partnership and annual reporting of local and national Statutory Performance Indicators. The service regularly publishes feedback through the website, in Libraries and Cultural Service News and local newspapers. Positive feedback, from the public groups and partners, is consistent year on year.

As part of the visit a stakeholder's forum was held and very positive relationship between the service and its expanding range of partners was clear. Stakeholders included other Council departments such as Building Standards and the Integration team, the NHS and also members of the local Milngavie History and Heritage Group, the Visibility Peer Support Group, the Minority Ethnic Forum. During the staff forum, it was clear that staff have pride in their commitment to customer care and are aware of current library initiatives. New services are regularly considered and a pilot storytelling session with pupils at Lairdsland Primary School was observed.

Reception and atmosphere

Staff are committed to the delivery of services in a neutral and welcoming environment. A welcome pack is freely available for new and existing customers. Facilities are zoned so that there are well-used by their target groups and observation shows that users are comfortable within the library environment. Both libraries visited had a good atmosphere with positive relationships between the staff and public. The café in Kirkintilloch is well used by the community and other spaces are available for learning in groups, quiet study or browsing. Bishopbriggs Library has a community room which is in regular demand. The library learning centre, a leardirect centre, is used for a range of activities including the Chatterbooks Club at the time of the visit. A good range of the public use the main library including mothers and toddlers, children and young people, use the library independently after school but outwith the supported homework group and adults browsing and reading newspapers and journals.

Customer Service

Customer care training starts in the Induction Training programme and, together with wider training needs, continues to be identified through the annual Performance Management and Development Process and the associated Training Needs Analysis. The feedback from the Annual Staff Survey is also used. The Library Service has its own Customer Care Charter clearly setting out what the service pledges to provide ' *to provide a friendly and welcoming atmosphere in which all our library users can access the full range of materials and services available*', what customers can expect and what communications from the service will include in terms of public feedback.

Training provided includes work around customer care, the Youth Music Initiative/Bookstart initiative, child protection, access training, race equality and spotters and referer's training to identify literacy needs. Training in customer care, child protection and race equality is refreshed annually and access to training run by Integrated Children's Services and Community Learning and Development is provided. The Race Equality Impact Assessments is a good example of the ways in which managers evaluate provision. In this case, services for new workers from the EU accession countries in Eastern Europe were reviewed and recommendations for improvement made. Another example is the action taken on barriers to membership as a result of the Social Inclusion Working Group report '*Open to all, useful to all*' which clearly evidences the objectives and progress made.

Senior staff with strategic remit are supported by professional library staff that ensure the delivery of high-quality library services via the frontline staff. Specialist posts support Children and Young People, Information and Archive Services, learning and outreach, the People's Network infrastructure and web information. Staff expertise, a focus on the needs of groups and individuals and an ambition to provide services flexibly through good opening hours, a mobile and housebound service, 24/7 reference services and a mobile classroom contribute to a very good overall performance. Community planning offers other opportunities to develop library services and to ensure that provision is consistent and co-ordinated.

Next steps

Quality Indicator 1

Areas for improvement

- Review range of provision for different groups, including the visually impaired and minority ethnic groups
- Continue to promote online information and learning resources
- Continue to develop wider Council information role

Quality Indicator 5

Areas for improvement

- Continue to embed ethos and values of the service with staff
- Continue to work within Community Planning to develop library services and monitor effectiveness

Levels

This report uses a six level scale, as follows:

- excellent – outstanding, sector leading
- very good – major strengths
- good – important strengths with areas for improvement
- adequate – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak – important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information	
Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources	Very good
Arrangements for access	Very good
Staff interaction and support	Very good
Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values	
Sense of identity	Very good
Reception and atmosphere	Very good
Customer service	Very good

2008