

2007-08

# Moray Council evaluation report

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLOIM)

## **Summary**

The service used the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLOIM) to focus attention on the ways in which libraries support communities and engage with them as well as looking at the sufficiency and use of resources and staffing.

From detailed discussions with staff, visits to libraries and a review of the evidence, it is clear that the Moray Council Libraries and Information Services staff are working hard to ensure that a range of quality library services are delivered across the authority and, in particular, to engage across communities in a purposeful and effective way. Dedicated staff use the community planning framework and informal opportunities to identify hard-to-reach groups and to develop and deliver services to meet the needs of communities. Feedback from the public clearly shows that libraries in Moray are highly valued by their users. The recent Best Value Review offered an opportunity to improve existing provision with network of integrated school and public libraries in villages. This will bring benefits for partners by enhancing broadband capacity, keeping services local and offering access to a wider range of council services than currently. Libraries will also be refurbished as a result.

Services have important strengths which are having a positive impact on individuals and community life. Key strengths in Community and Personal Participation include the roll-out of the National Entitlement Card; outreach into communities and evidence that communities respond positively; systematic evaluation of quality of provision; and the opportunities for individuals to make a meaningful contribution through volunteering in the library. The other quality indicator reviewed, Organisation and Use of Resources and Space, has key strengths including well-developed policies and procedures for staff and Customer Service Standards. The use of ILAs (Individual Learning Accounts) to improve learning opportunities in the library is regarded as excellent practice.

As part of the PLQIM, staff have 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**

Located on the north east coast of Scotland, Moray is a largely rural authority with low unemployment. A picturesque part of Scotland, Moray is famed for its malt whisky and beautiful coastline. RAF Lossiemouth and Kinloss are major local employers and it is worth noting that 40% of Moray's population comes, not from the nearby district, but from the rest of the UK. Much of the countryside is very sparsely populated and the area includes part of the Cairngorm mountain range. This poses challenges for service delivery with many routes inaccessible for periods of the year and pressures to sustain services to small, geographically isolated communities. Three-quarters of the population of 87,000 live in or around the five main centres of Elgin, Forres, Keith, Buckie and Lossiemouth. Audit Scotland's 2006 Report 'The Audit of Best Value and Community Planning'<sup>1</sup> notes "There is some prosperity in Moray, with a growing population and relatively low unemployment. But there are also significant concerns about the area's future. Traditional sources of employment are in decline and there is a high dependency on local RAF bases, which account for around 21% of jobs. With the lowest average pay and one of the least qualified workforces in Scotland, Moray is in a fragile position." The report criticised the lack of leadership and direction by elected members and by senior managers. It noted the 'lack of clear strategic direction based on knowledge of community and user needs'. The Elgin floods of 1997 have left a legacy of pressure on capital funding for flood defences.

There are 15 libraries with free Internet access and 3 mobile libraries all with disabled access. Elgin Library is a learndirect centre, offering a high quality of accredited courses, and is an excellent example of the role which libraries can play in supporting personal development and encouraging economic growth. There are a further 6 learning centres and 7 smaller learning points. Audit Scotland's report of 2006 notes that 'the proportion of the local population using the local libraries is one of the highest in Scotland. Similarly, there are high numbers using learning centres and access points.' The Services sit within Educational Services which at that time had identified that five of the library buildings were 'totally inadequate'. The proposed relocation of 8 libraries is due from completion in 2009.

## **Process**

Using the Public Library Quality Improvement Framework, senior library service staff allocated themes from the two quality indicators chose and encouraged all staff to identify and collect evidence. The leaders met as a group and assessed the Strengths and Areas for Improvement. Robert Ruthven, Library and Archives Service Manager, Stirling Council and Dorothy Browse, Service Manager – Libraries and Museums, Fife Council attended at external verifiers. Presentations were made by staff on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2008 and this was followed by lengthy discussions with the library management team and a large group of staff from across the service points. Visits to Elgin, Aberlour and Forres Libraries were made. Members of the verification team met on two later occasions to review the evidence and agree the outcomes.

## **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

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.moray.gov.uk/downloads/file46118.pdf>

adequate – strengths just outweigh weaknesses  
weak – important weaknesses  
unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

## Quality Indicator 2 Personal and community participation

### Strengths

- Outreach into communities and evidence that communities respond positively
- Systematic evaluation of quality of provision
- Collections in health centres
- Opportunities for individuals to make a meaningful contribution through volunteering in the library
- Lead role in national entitlement card development
- Use of ILAs (Individual Learning Accounts) to improve learning opportunities in library

### Promoting personal and community development

Audit Scotland's report strongly criticised the progress made in terms of Community Planning and the understanding of local community needs. Library Service staff have worked hard to understand the needs of communities and have built a place for libraries within the community planning process on the strength of their response to those needs. Community planning information is published on the Council website, which is accessible from all libraries and libraries also contain a list of key worker contacts. The website also acts as a vehicle for surveys and public consultation, and library staff trained to support public use. Involved at all levels from the LCN (Local Community Network/Neighbourhood?), library staff are active in the community planning groups for local workers, themed groups and there is representation on the Co-ordination group in Elgin. Special groups, such as the ESOL group, which has a Moray-wide remit, also has library representation. Meetings of worker's groups have been facilitated in Elgin, Keith, Forres and Buckie. Projects which have resulted from involvement in community planning neighbourhood forums, include the Linkwood Project, the Side by Side Project, Reading Together, an Anti-Social Behaviour initiative and the Libraries Review. Work is continuing to improve consultation with partners and to supply information leaflets more effectively.

Information about each community is co-ordinated by the Information Services Librarian to build a community information profile. The existing community information database is currently being updated, developing the service using Talis Engage to facilitate customer input of information. Information portals in important areas like health have been developed by staff and linked to the website. Council and health consultations use libraries and surveys have included library opening hours, flood alleviation plans, Local and Housing Plans. Feedback from customers to libraries and the Council includes comments and suggestions boxes in libraries and the corporate complaints system. In Forres, a Councillors' Community File has been established as a communication tool to share information. Mobile libraries make an important contribution in feeding back information from small, outlying communities. Staff run a housebound service to ensure that those at home and in hospital still have an opportunity to take part in community life.

Information across a range of areas is provided by libraries including Scottish and European government, events for children and young people, parenting and ICT. Moray Libraries and Information Services offers excellent support for skills development and has achieved learndirect Scotland status for its learning centres, as

a mark of quality. The use of ILAs (Individual Learning Accounts) has helped to fund two staff posts and that has improved learning opportunities offered by the library. Accredited courses on ICT and other lifeskills help to ensure that the public have the necessary skills to access information, learning and participation in cultural life in an electronic environment. In a partnership with health visitors and health centres, collections of materials and information have been placed in health centres and are provided to health visitors. Whilst this is offered to all, more development work is required to improve the uptake. A Bibliotherapy scheme is in development.

### **Providing community space**

Feedback from the public clearly shows that libraries in Moray are highly valued by their users. Delivery of the national entitlement card is a key area for libraries and Moray Libraries and Information Services staff use their skills and knowledge to support the uptake of the card, which is currently used for travel. Libraries are the first point of contact and library transactions will be added over time.

The range of library involvement in local community events is extensive with participation in local shows, fayres and Highland Games. Attendance at a community event recently resulted in a partnership with the local fire service and library staff now provide ICT training for fire service employees. Further examples include providing information services for new workers from Eastern European working at Walkers' Shortbread, the Link Project programme for the isolated and those at risk of exclusion and IT training for New Elgin residents. A Scots Language Group is well established at Lossiemouth Library and has active participation by around 40 members offering a varied programme.

Libraries offer a valuable opportunity to volunteer and contribute to individual's and community development in a direct way, whether it is assisting with homework support or being an IT buddy. Working with local schools, work experience and placements for secondary school pupils have been arranged and this approach is being extended to Return to Work, Employment Support and Disability Groups.

Open days are organised in partnership with community groups such as the Writers' Group, the Family History Society, the Polish community and Heritage groups. Other partners include the Headland Trust and a variety of partners from the voluntary sector. Mobile library services are an important link for those living in outlying areas. The service targets rural communities, schools, the housebound and elderly. Staff have an important role in profiling the information needs of their customers, planning routes to optimize access and actively responding to needs.

### **Access to community heritage and culture**

The service works with a number of local community groups with a local history and heritage focus. An important part of library activity is collecting and providing access to heritage information, both ensuring that the past and present is available for future generations. A new heritage centre is being planned and this will greatly improve facilities for public access and participation. Volunteers update the information on the current heritage database using Libindx. An e-shop is in development, offering publications of local interest for sale and a service to assist with family history research. Communities are encouraged to become involved in heritage groups and forums. Good examples of close working partnerships with local heritage groups are active in Buckie, Cullen and Keith. Another interesting way in which the service supports local culture and communities is providing a booking

system for the Town Hall, music centre and football pitches, as well as selling tickets to local events.

Collections of local materials are available in all libraries and members of the public can donate local materials to the service. There are a number of local heritage web groups including Cullen, Aberlour and Tomintoul who use library skills and facilities to pursue their personal heritage interests. The Moray Church trail, Spirit of Speyside and Thomas Telford initiatives are examples of ways in which libraries can encourage and support displays of local heritage.

A recent partnership has been developed with the National Library of Scotland, the local library service and family history societies. The NLS creates displays of local materials and the local family history groups can hold open days in libraries using the materials. This all contributes to the library's aim of providing access to archives, records, local studies materials and the heritage website.

Elgin library has a good gallery and exhibition area which has particularly strong partnerships with local artists, whose work is regularly displayed and sold. Not only does the gallery provide an attractive venue, with the library café and external park facilities for visitors to enjoy, it also contributes to the local economy with frequent sales. Other libraries organise local community displays and exhibition of the work of individual artists and crafts people.

<p><b>Areas for improvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of stock profiles and introduction of evidence based stock management</li> </ul>
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**Next steps**

<b>Quality Indicator 2 Personal and community participation</b>	
Planned approaches promoting personal and community participation	Very good
Provision of community space for a range of activities	Good
Supporting, recording and providing access to community heritage and culture	Very good

**Quality Indicator 6 Organisation and use of resources and space**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-developed and clear policies and procedures for staff</li> <li>• Length of opening hours in small communities</li> <li>• Plans to sustain network of libraries in co-located premises</li> <li>• Customer service standards</li> </ul>
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**Accommodation and facilities**

The recent Best Value Review offered an opportunity to improve existing provision by agreeing to relocate 7 libraries in schools and 1 in a health living centre in a three year programme. This will bring benefits for partners by enhancing broadband capacity, keeping services local and offering access to a wider range of council services than currently. Libraries will also be refurbished as a result. Moray Libraries have a strategic network of learning centres. Council procedures of conditions surveys, maintenance inspections and ongoing health and safety checks ensure that

buildings are regularly assessed in terms of fitness for purpose. Not all libraries have disabled access but this will be rectified through the shared premises programme. There is a planned programme of library refurbishment however this has not been implemented due to budget constraints. Access to capital funding is limited by other priorities, in particular Flood Alleviation. Plans to improve targeting of mobile libraries are also being developed.

Most libraries have attractive furnishings. Until recently a replacement programme for upgrade was in place, however, the removal of upgrade funding has already led to clear variance in standards across the service. Library furniture needs to be regularly refreshed to ensure that the library environment is an attractive, modern public space. Signage to libraries within local towns is generally good but it is not consistent across the service. Guiding within libraries is variable and the introduction of a consistent house style would be beneficial to customers. Display areas can be quite small but Forres and Aberlour libraries are able to create attractive reading promotions and incorporate community information. The Customer Service Standards have developed agreed standards and feedback from customers is positive. Consistent monitoring of the standards needs to be maintained.

Elgin Library has a café on site, Forres has a linked café facility and other libraries will provide refreshments for events only. The introduction of coffee facilities where space allows would be an attractive development for customers.

### **Organisation and promotion of resources and services**

There are 15 libraries with free Internet access and 3 mobile libraries. Library services in Moray are structured into 4 key areas – Buckie, Elgin and Keith areas managed by principal or senior librarians with community librarians based in the main town of Elgin, Forres and Lossiemouth.

Currently stock in libraries is attractive and in good condition. The range is impressive and replenishment of stock ranks 8th for adults and 3<sup>rd</sup> for children and young people in Scotland. It was disappointing that substantial reductions to the library book fund have recently been made. Good collection-building needs sustained investment and any deterioration in the range or quantity of stock is soon noticed by regular users. A cycle of declining investment and corresponding declining use can follow.

The stock collection policy is reviewed annually. Suggestions from communities, customers and staff are actively encouraged. Statistics of stock acquisitions are reviewed on a monthly basis for each library. Community library profiles are updated regularly in line with Community profiles and with input from the staff. Exchange profiles are produced using the branch profiles and are used by staff to select relevant stock for the exchanges which take place regularly. Mini exchanges are carried out among branches within an area to refresh areas of heavily used stock. Performance targets are set in consultation with staff. Stock condition guidelines are used to identify out of date material, stock in poor condition or stock which is no longer used. Collections of material are in most Homes in all areas and are exchanged regularly. Collections of children's books are also in some Health Centres and are also exchanged regularly.

Guidelines for Publicity and Promotion have been developed and local contacts built and nurtured. This has contributed a range of attractive promotional materials, including pull-up banners; welcome packs and publicity information that are of a high standard. The partnership with the National Library of Scotland has resulted in

training on writing for the media. The website was designed by a staff team and there are templates for promoting events on the website. My Dezine software is used for learning newsletters. In addition to the attractive print materials, staff are proactive in telling customers about forthcoming activities, face to face, in talks to groups and at community events. The learning centres have a strong and well developed brand which is well used and could be further developed for book displays and promotions. Libraries use the local press, community newsletters, the Council Intranet and the Internet to reach out beyond the existing customer base.

ICT resources include over free 90 public internet access computers. The online library catalogue has the facility to search the National Library of Scotland and the British Library individually or simultaneously with the Moray catalogue. The online requests and renewals facility results in nearly 400 reservations a month and around 900 renewals per month online. There is a public feedback facility. The reference resources available range from Encyclopaedia Britannica to SCRAN and News UK. These are accessible to customers by using their membership number.

The Talis Library Management System was upgraded late 2006 August 2007 and January 2008 with a further upgrade due in late summer this year. Talis Mobile has been used on mobile libraries for nearly three years. It is an offline system which is synchronised daily to ensure it is as accurate as possible. Online membership forms are available on the Moray Council website for completion. The library management system is interfaced with the Council Financial Management system and efficiently saves staff time from both services.

A Libraries Helpdesk operates centrally to give initial help to the public with ICT problems and to liaise with ICT. Proposals to install a pilot of Wifi service in Elgin are being considered.

### **Deployment of skilled staff**

As well as the community library staff, there are a number of specialist posts representing children's services, local heritage, records management, information services, reader development, learning centres and library systems. Staff are responsible for development, advice and support across the service. Central administration, bibliographic services, including acquisitions, cataloguing, stock exchanges, requests and deliveries are provided by the libraries support unit, base at Elgin Library. Senior Library and Information Assistants supervise and support frontline service delivery in each area. The introduction of the People's Network was an opportunity to formalise the library services' lifelong learning role and appoint a Learning Centre Adviser. Now developed into four posts, staff deliver and accredit learning in Elgin Library. A further two posts are funded by income raised from the uptake of ILAs and accredited learning support and delivery. Staffing is a major challenge with the logistics of winter travel and cover in community and mobile libraries. A pool of relief staff provides cover for leave, interim vacancies, sickness and training.

Public expectations of excellence in customer care and information provision puts pressure on staff development and training to ensure consistently high standards of delivery. The service has developed a range of detailed job descriptions, policies and procedures to make staff fully aware of their remit and what is expected of them. Job descriptions and person specifications have recently been reviewed in the single

status job evaluation process clearly stating a high but achievable standard of service.

Staff, who are responsible for the recruitment and selection of employees, attend a 2 day training course delivered by Personnel Services and newly appointed staff follow an induction programme, including a Council Induction to ensure that the ethos and priorities of the Council are understood. Employee Review and Development is carried out for all staff on an annual basis. This helps managers to plan and allocate work, and develop their team. It offers opportunities to all employees to put forward ideas about how to improve practices and services.

Annual training plans are prepared by the Principal Librarian and the staff development working group, however, the staff training budget is quite limited in comparison to other Scottish library services. Considering the progress made by the service towards meeting local needs and Council objectives, adequate funds for training are essential to sustaining skills and developing the competencies required for the future. With the regular use of relief staff, managers are aware that the currency of the competencies and knowledge of the relief library and information assistants is important, as it is for permanent staff. Investment in staff training will help to broaden the skills base of staff and the value the public can get from their service which is embracing new, extended roles. For example, the SQA's Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Applications of ICT in Libraries would be a useful qualification for Learning Centre staff, broadening their educator, course design and net navigator skills.

Moray Council Libraries and Information Services are leading developments in Customer Service Standards, which have been agreed by Council and are widely available. All staff are trained to these standards, which are monitored by supervisors and management. Standards extend from customer skills to stock, display, layout, furnishings and buildings. This focus is underpinned by a strategic approach to monitoring performance information. Performance information includes usage statistics and also staff support for visits, ICT sessions and story times.

Communication is well planned making use of email and telephones as well as face to face meetings. Area libraries and the Libraries Service Development team have monthly meetings and these are minuted and circulated to all staff, including relief staff. A number of working groups take forward specific issues, such as the Library website. Minutes reveal that many of the action points are the responsibility of a few senior staff and the wider team should be more engaged in the deployment of decisions and activities.

### **Use of funding**

Budget training is given to supervisor level and above. Information about the annual budget process is circulated to staff. There is a formula for allocation of budget and this is updated in line with needs. Budget printouts are supplied regularly and expenditure is reviewed in an ongoing basis. Senior managers are exploring improved monitoring of outcomes and impacts.

External funding has been secured for a number of projects from the ILAs, the Big Lottery for IT in the Community and Hi-Hopes. Funding is also available through the partnerships which libraries are active in. This includes ESOL funding with Community Learning and Development and Moray College and LCN allocation for events.

**Areas for improvement**

- Funding for staff training and development needs
- Development of staff intranet
- Introduction of Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Applications of ICT in Libraries
- Improve the currency of the competencies and knowledge of the relief library and information assistants
- Ongoing monitoring of Customer Service Standards
- Develop use of library branding

**Next steps**

<b>Quality Indicator 6 Organisation and use of resources and space</b>	
Accommodation and facilities	Adequate
Organisation and promotion of resources and services	Good
Deployment of skilled staff	Adequate
Use of funding	Good

**2008**