

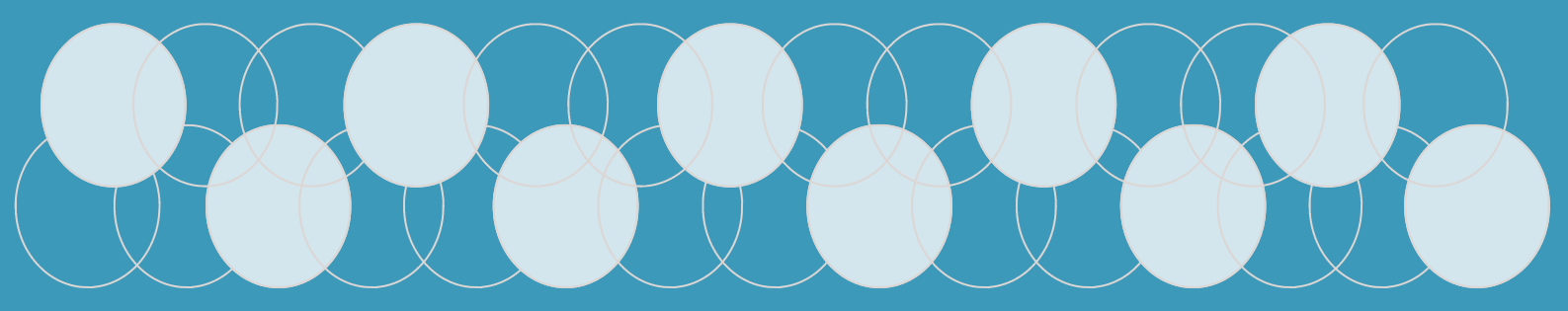


Scottish Library & Information Council



Dumfries and Galloway Council self evaluation 2009

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM)



Summary

The service used the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) to focus attention on the ways that Libraries, Information and Archives provided access to information and the ethos and values of the service.

From detailed discussions with staff, visits to libraries and a review of the evidence, it is clear that Dumfries and Galloway Council Libraries, Information and Archives (LIA) staff are strongly committed to developing a range of services. The strong central team at LIA have established a wide range of productive partnerships, which are assessed for value and impact on a regular basis, and this has resulted in positive service development. Council support for the service is variable, with a significant reduction in materials funds resulting in a disappointing downward trend in the last 3 years of CIPFA statistics relating to adult usage. At the time of the visit further changes are under consideration and the visiting team were concerned about the negative impact this might have on an otherwise very good service. In particular a possible move to dilute operational management by transferring responsibility for certain aspects of service delivery to area teams loses the strategic overview of a complex rural service. LIA require a delicate balance of local knowledge and central leadership to deliver relevant services, in particular the equity of service across the Council area and the very good partnerships are likely to suffer.

The inclusion of LIA in the broadband pathfinder project has resulted in excellent connectivity, which offers greater opportunity to support the public in skills development, cultural enrichment, leisure and the tourist industry. It is important to note that in other council areas, the public face considerable challenges in accessing tools such as BBC iplayer. The public do not have to face the barrier of a restrictive corporate filter, with appropriate education and vigilance being the preferred means. Dumfries and Galloway have a number of ICT officers who work from within LIA to develop and deliver training for staff and the public. This highly successful and flexible model is coordinated centrally. This has resulted in skills development for staff, employers and individuals and progression for many to other courses or providers. This is regarded as excellent. Key strengths of the service include the provision of broadband internet access on regularly refreshed machines, use of evidence based stock management techniques, use of community planning to target collections, partnerships and support for staff skills development.

The second quality indicator looks at ethos and values. This is a service with a strong customer-focus. The visiting team noted best practice in the use of Inspector8, as team of young people who review and recommend service change from the perspective of the young person. LIA have implemented many of the recommendations. The service is the first library services to gain the Customer Service Excellence Award, building on a number of successful Charter Mark applications. The Customer Journey Mapping is considered excellent practice. A key strength of the service is the way in which this is communicated to the public.

As part of the PLQIM, staff have identified a number of areas for improvement and this will form the 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 for communities where the 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 contribute 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

Dumfries and Galloway Council is a mainly rural unitary authority serving a population of around 147,000. It covers 2,380 square miles, making it Scotland's third largest authority by area. One of the key challenges to service delivery is the density of population, which at 60 people per square mile is low. Dumfries and Galloway has relatively low deprivation, holding 20th ranking in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Council is the largest employer in the area, with 87% of local businesses employing less than 9 people. Tourism is important to the area's economy and some of the tourist 'brands' are well-known across Scotland – Wigtown is known as Scotland's 'book town' Castle Douglas as 'food town' and Kirkcudbright as 'artist's town'.

The council has 47 members representing 13 multi-member wards. There is no overall political control and currently, a Conservative/Liberal Democrat minority administration is in place. The council's organisational structure has been changed a number of times over the past 5 years and currently a further restructure is in process. Other factors impacting on the LIA service delivery are a £158k reduction in the Materials Fund in 2007/8, a large number of temporary posts because of changes to staff recruitment to make savings, a period when the Archivist's post was frozen, and delays to internal restructuring and implementation of the single status review.

The four mobile libraries make a significant contribution, covering 150 communities and 70 housebound customers. There are 24 community libraries and an archive centre.

Audit Scotland's statutory performance indicators show a steep decline in active library borrowing since the £158k reduction in the Materials Funds, with the number of borrowers as a percentage of the resident population falling from 26.7% in 2005/6, well above the Scottish average to 17.9% in 07/08, significantly adrift from the Scottish average. The number of visits to libraries is well above the Scottish average. Expenditure on materials per thousand of population has fallen to the fifth lowest in Scotland from fifteenth just two years ago, according to figures produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. The proportion of older people in Dumfries and Galloway is greater than the Scottish average with 24.2% aged over 60 compared with 16.4%. A SLIC and CIPFA survey recently demonstrated that the strongest support for library services comes from this age group.

Process

Building on success: a public library quality improvement matrix self evaluation toolkit, prepared by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) provides the framework for the process. Dumfries and Galloway Council Libraries, Information and Archives staff chose to look at Quality Indicator 1 Access to information and Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and Values. Following a series of staff focus meetings, led by the Cultural Services Manager LIA, staff worked together to identify and evaluate evidence about the impact and outcomes and their findings were presented to SLIC.

Working with the assistance of two external verifiers, Robert Ruthven, Library and Archives Manager, Stirling Council and Diana Barr, Libraries Manager, South Lanarkshire Council, SLIC reviewed the evidence and carried out discussions with members of staff, the public and the management team on 16th and 17th March 2009. Visits were made to the Ewart Library; libraries at Georgetown, Lockerbie, Gatehouse, Kirkcudbright, Wigtown, Newton Stewart, Castle Douglas, Annan and Lochthorn; and the Archive Centre. In addition the digital photograph collection at the Central Support Unit was also visited. Time was spent talking to partners from Dumfries and Galloway College, the Adult Literacy and Numeracy partnership, Inspector8, the Modernising Services Team, Local Members and the Mental Health Access Officer. A number of members of the public were kind enough to share their views about the service they received whilst teams were visiting. The team would also like to thank Dr David Steel from the Artist's Footprints project, the Friends of the Archives, primary schools, reading groups, the U3A Art Group, the Chief Registrar and Hope Services. These arrangements helped SLIC to come to a balanced view on the outcome of the self-evaluation.

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
- satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak – important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information

Strengths

- Good broadband networks and inclusion in the broadband pathfinder project
- Community profiling and use of Community Planning to target collections
- Use of evidence based stock management techniques
- Equity of access to information delivered through online information resources
- All public access computers are less than 4 years old and regular upgrade programme is in place
- Local studies and archives collection development
- Partnership
- Centrally-coordinated support for skills development, including staff knowledge of online reference tools

Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources

The Stock Management Policy is regularly reviewed and evidence based stock management techniques have been introduced to help manage stock effectively. Professional staff are responsible for their own stock budgets so providing them with more information from the library management systems will make selection more efficient and effective. Customers and staff are able to contribute to stock selection through a suggestion scheme and requests are responded to either by purchase or with a reason why the item cannot be supplied. Community profiles have been built up and staff use Community Planning to target collections such as the Healthy reading and dual language collections.

LIA staff greatly value the equity of access which online subscription services bring to large rural services with a number of smaller community libraries where both space and finance are constrained. Small print reference collections are stocked in all libraries, with the main collections based in the Ewart Library in Dumfries. Considerable effort has gone into staff training to ensure that there is a high level of awareness about the scope and content of the various online services and to encourage the public to make use of the 24/7 access which these services bring. The success of this sustained marketing and awareness raising is evidenced in the recent statistics monitored by SLIC, which show that Dumfries and Galloway are outperforming their benchmarking family and many other services in the use of services such as KnowUK and NewsUK. Users can access the online subscription services remotely or directly via all Council public access computers, including Kompass, a business information service, and Encyclopedia Britannica. Oxford Online subscription will commence in the new financial year. The balance between print and online collections is regularly reviewed and changes made to the Stock Management Policy.

All stock is available via the online catalogue and stock is regularly exchanged to offer the public wider choice in their local library. The Central Reserve Stock is held at Dumfries and helps to provide a pool for stock rotation or to preserve the last copy of significant interest, whilst not taking up valuable public-facing shelf space. There is a charge for requests from between community libraries and the full Inter Library Loan service is also available. There is no doubt that the reduction of £158k in the Materials Fund has led to a reduction in the uptake of services and the public made

representations to the visiting team about the lack of new books in particular. Plans are in place to restore the Materials Fund to its 2005/6 level but the Council should not lose sight of the need to sustain and develop the Materials Fund as the demands on it grow with the need to provide more expensive items, such as visually impaired reading materials like audio books, for the slightly older demographic group.

Partnerships have been established to improve the range of specialist information available. The Mental Health Access Officer has worked with LIA and the local NHS to introduce a Healthy reading promotion, dealing with a range of aspects of health and wellbeing. This partnership offers many opportunities for development including extending it to young people, adding a health information literacy training programme for staff and the public and working together to develop other health information services for the public. There are good links with the College and other education providers to offer skills development opportunities to the public and to work together to offer support and guidance or to avoid duplication of effort. Partnership with the local community police has resulted in the library providing neutral territory for information days for incoming workers with different cultural backgrounds and attitudes. The police regard this a positive development opening the way for improved provision of online information in community languages and local language collections.

An extensive local history collection is housed at the Ewart Library and a large collection of digital photographs is about to be launched. With a strong tourist industry, many of which are genealogical tourists, the local history collection is extremely important. The Archive Centre has benefited from its 'Friends' who have helped to improve access to the collection, volunteering around 1500 hours of time. Many of the enquiries received by LIA relate to family and local history. All libraries have a focus on their local area with their own collections and specialities. These resources are accessible through the library catalogue. At the time of the visits a public consultation on 'Core Paths' through the Dumfries and Galloway countryside was being carried out in partnership with libraries. The teams observed members of the public studying the maps provided and recording their views.

Provision for access by disabled people is generally good, with assistive technologies, hearing loops and mainly flexible layouts in libraries. There is a list of all the equipment and its location on the library website. Whilst libraries were prioritised in the corporate DDA programme, there is still some work to be done in addressing some specific DDA issues.

Arrangements for access

Eight of the larger libraries are open 50 hours per week and most of the others open between 10 and 44 hours; there are 3 which are open less than 10 hours per week. Free access is provided to information sources in all formats (including audio-visual), computer access, book use and enquiries, with the exception of some family history research enquiries.

Since the People's Network initiative, Dumfries and Galloway Council has refreshed the original public access computers so that there are around 140 machines in regular use and these will shortly be upgraded again. An online booking system helps manage access but it was clear from talking to the public that they highly value the provision. Staff balance the need for skills development courses with drop-in use. The original 2MB connections were found to be insufficient and the connections are mainly 4MB in smaller libraries and 10MB in larger places. The Ewart will shortly have a 100MB connection. Libraries are part of the broadband pathfinder project for the South of Scotland. The public were observed using the library computers for classes, communication, business and tourism. Around 20% of the population used library internet access in 2007. The introduction of wireless internet access service would help to extend access to existing provision by providing more capacity for drop-in and class use, for which there is great demand.

Filtering software is not in use, which is unusual but has the benefits of avoiding the difficulties faced by many library services across Scotland in providing access to services such as BBC iplayer or the CAIRNS (Co-operative Access to Information and Resources Network in Scotland) which provides a single point of access to Scotland's library catalogues. The ICT officers have focused on user

education to alert the public to appropriate use and staff are vigilant in monitoring and addressing any problems.

The library webpages are clearly laid out and contain a wide range of information. A number of transactions can be made via the library website, including access to online subscription services, booking computer use, request a mobile library stop, reservations and renewals. The National Entitlement Card is in use in libraries and plans are in place to issue cards from libraries and this will make joining easier. The website has details of the housebound service which visits on a 3 weekly cycle, reading groups, children's activities and services, the healthy reading programme, courses and the libraries' publications programme which has a number of items of local interest.

The mobile library service has four vehicles which make visits on a three weekly timetable, covering 150 stops, for those who live over two miles away from a community library. In addition 50 specific stops are made to the housebound. Some villages receive a weekly service because of special circumstances. Mobiles make short stops and do not have significant numbers of information requests, but any enquiries are responded to by staff using mobile telephones. Whilst they do not have online access to the Internet or the library management system, they use data capture technology via laptops.

LIA have a vast array of information leaflets and marketing materials and these are, in the main, attractively produced and of a good quality. There is a need for an overarching strategy for marketing and marketing materials for LIA. This will ensure that funding and staff effort is well-used and carefully directed towards identified target groups. The new upgrade to Vubis, 3.0, will provide a text facility to mobile phones to alert or inform library members and the Council's new CRM will offer others ways to improve information management.

Staff interaction and support

Some years ago, Dumfries and Galloway Council was the first to secure a two-year grant-aid support from the Scottish Library and Information Council to provide an in-house ICT officer to support the roll-out of the People's Network and this has been developed and sustained so a team of five ICT officers offer training and support to staff and the public across the council area. This is high-quality in-house provision has resulted in a high-level of staff competence and confidence when it comes to ICT and online service provision. Under the People's Network ICT training programme, funding was provided for all staff to be trained to European Computer Driving Licence level. In addition to the initial investment, LIA have maintained the high level of staff ICT skills and a number of staff have been supported through the qualification by the in-house ICT team. An awards ceremony was held at the time of the visit, with some candidates from the staff and public receiving ECDL certificates as well as certificates in First Aid, Conflict Management and Teenage Reading.

The staff training and development programme ensures that staff have the necessary skills to support the public and this is evidenced in the Core Competency Training and Development Plan. A corporate appraisal scheme is being introduced and the current method of identifying skills needs will transfer. Learn IT is the standard tool used to support computer enquiries and there is scope to extend this into information literacy skills. Training is carefully evaluated and records kept. As staff are delivering IT taster sessions to the public, then it is important that the quality of their own skills is appropriate and it is good that these new responsibilities are reflected in their job descriptions.

The Cybercentre in Dumfries, Stranraer Library and Wigtown Library are accredited learndirect scotland centres. The quality of learning and support is very high and the public are full of praise for the skills development they have received. There are already an attractive range of courses which receive sustained support but there are always new opportunities for the ICT officers to take.

Quality Indicator 1

Areas for improvement

- Introduce wi-fi to address issues of capacity
- Further progress on integration of print and online information
- Increased investment in Materials Fund
- Roll-out use of evidence based stock management techniques across the council area
- Integrate use of National Entitlement Card
- Launch digital photograph collection
- Develop CRM and text functionality with Vubis 3.0 upgrade
- Expand range of courses available
- Develop a Marketing Strategy

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information	
Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources	Very good
Arrangements for access	Very good
Staff interaction and support	Excellent

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values

Strengths

- Customer-centred service ethos
- Sustained achievement in national customer care standards, such as Charter Mark and the recent Customer Service Excellence award
- Use of Inspector8 to improve library services for young people
- Customer Journey mapping
- Community profiling and use of Community Planning to target collections
- Wigtown Passport
- Customer Care Charter and Guidelines
- Clear links to Council's Golden Thread

Sense of identity

LIA is committed to supporting the Council's vision 'to make Dumfries and Galloway the best place in Scotland to live, learn, work, visit and grow'. The values which underpin the vision include: customer first; continuous improvement; equality and diversity; local decision making and service delivery; openness and communication; teamwork and partnership; and trust and honesty. The LIA Development Plan is clearly linked to the wider Council Plan 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. LIA use the Community Planning process to target specific services and collections and maintain a balance between strategic leadership and economies of both scale and effort at the centre whilst being responsive to changing local needs. The visiting team expressed concern that an area structure runs the risk of duplication of effort, loss of strategic direction, a distancing between professional support and local need, partnership working which is narrow in focus and loses national connections and an overall loss of equity and quality. It must be stressed that, at present, there is positive customer feedback, which is evident from systematic collection and evaluation, and no evidence that suggests that the experiences of individuals will be improved by the proposed changed structure.

Consultation and reporting is wide-ranging. LIA consistently undertake national customer service appraisal, including repeated successful Charter Mark applications and is the only library service in Scotland to hold the Customer Service Excellence Award. Consultation with stakeholders includes the annual customer survey, the CIPFA Public Library User Survey (PLUS) and customers and staff are asked contribute their view of the service. Performance reporting is clear for the public through notices in libraries and on the Council website. In addition, Customer Journey mapping has been carried out, identifying a range of processes and procedures from the customers' view aiding insight and ultimately leading to service change and improvement. This is enhanced by using the Inspector8 team of young people across council services to report on services from their perspective and to make recommendations. Libraries visited were able to discuss the Inspector8 visits and to show the team where changes had been made. As well as regular reporting of Statutory Performance Indicators, the service regularly publishes feedback and reports through local newspapers. Customer comments are encouraged at service points and these will be transferred to Vubis, once the next upgrade is completed. Positive feedback, from the public groups and partners, is consistent year on year.

As part of the visit a partners' lunch was held and very positive relationship between the service and its expanding range of partners was clear. Stakeholders included Dumfries and Galloway College, the Adult Literacy and Numeracy partnership, Inspector8, the Modernising Services Team, Local Members and the Mental Health Access Officer. Whilst the team were visiting libraries many other partners were able to come along and discuss their library service. During discussions with staff, it was clear that staff take pride in their commitment to customer care and are aware of current library initiatives, however, there is a danger that the success of this service rests not on the Council's strategic support for LIA but the on the good will of staff and the support of the public for a responsive local service.

One excellent local partnership is the Wigtown Passport which encourages the development of a love of reading for enjoyment and the reading habit. A series of activities and borrowing attracts reward 'stamps' from the library, local primary school or Galloway Gazette. The brainchild of Stewart Anderson, Headteacher of Wigtown Primary School, this incentive scheme encourages reading through Bronze, Silver and Gold (with two levels in each) and results in book tokens, family passes to local attractions and parent and child day trips to the Glasgow Science Centre or a London Museum. Dozens of different pieces of work were on display and the scheme, which has been running for 5 years, has just been extended to a 'Rainbow' level.

Another notable example of local involvement in services include the 1500 plus hours put in by the Friends of the Archive group. A 15,000 strong digitised collection of local photographs has been prepared for web access and this service will shortly be launched. Dr David Steele, instigator of the Artist's Footsteps website, has devoted a huge amount of time to identifying and locating paintings by Dumfries and Galloway artists, building a website full of supporting information and links to galleries. Much of the information has been written by Dr Steele and this is a wonderful resource for artists, art historians and local residents.

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 clearly guided so that they are well-used by their target groups and observation shows that users are comfortable within the library environment. All libraries visited had a good atmosphere with positive relationships between the staff and public. The Cybercentre in Ewart Library is well used by the community and there are a variety of other spaces are available for learning in groups, quiet study or browsing. Some of the libraries are in historic buildings and staff do what they can to accommodate nursery groups for storytimes, teach basic literacy and numeracy or other activities. Other purpose-built libraries are standing up well to continued use for a variety of purposes. On some occasions there are capacity issues and the introduction of a mobile classroom, wireless facilities and making laptops available for public use would help. Children's activities are well-supported and there is plenty of visual evidence of the different communities reflected in displays, artwork, reading recommendations and exhibitions throughout the different libraries.

The visiting team were able to observe the public use of the main library including mothers and toddlers, children and young people using the library independently after school or with teachers, learners following formal courses and adults browsing and reading newspapers and journals. One of the areas for further development would be to use some of the retail techniques training programmes to build staff skills in promotion and display.

Customer Service

Customer care starts with ensuring that all potential applicants are clear about LIA’s expectation of the highest levels of customer care. This is shown in job descriptions. Skills audits are carried out every two years to feed into the Core Competencies training and Development programme. A corporate appraisal will be introduced shortly and the service will pilot the SVQ qualification in Customer Care. LIA has its own Customer Care Charter clearly setting out what the service pledges to provide ‘*to provide easy access to materials and services in a friendly helpful atmosphere; provide a range of materials and services which meet needs; provide quality services which are both efficient and effective; and be accountable by encouraging feedback and being responsive to comments and suggestions.*’ A Children’s Charter has also been developed which promises that staff will ‘*Be friendly and helpful and listen to your ideas about the library; help you to find the information you want; and to help you if you are not sure which books to choose.*’ Both versions clearly set out what customers can expect and staff are reminded of their commitment to achieving these pledges in the appropriate notice for staff.

Quality Indicator 5

Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement corporate appraisal scheme • Pilot SVQ in Customer Care • Introduce retail techniques • Transfer customer comments to Vubis 3.0 • Continue to develop partnership working 	

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values	
<i>Sense of identity</i>	<i>Very good</i>
<i>Reception and atmosphere</i>	<i>Very good</i>
<i>Customer service</i>	<i>Excellent</i>

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