

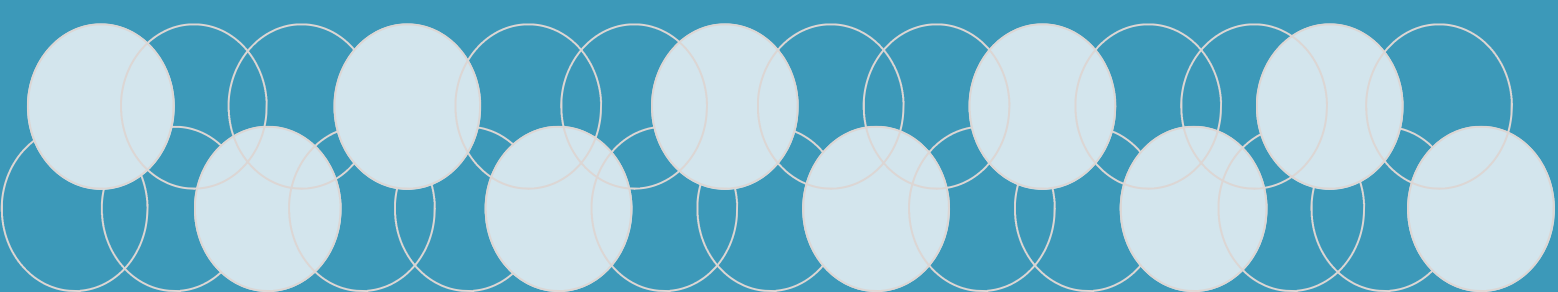


Scottish Library & Information Council



Dundee City Council self evaluation 2009

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM)



Summary

From a review of the evidence, discussions with staff and library visits, it is clear that Dundee City Council's library and information services staff are working hard to provide extended reading choices and experiences for the public. Whilst issues are falling, this is consistent with the national trend and the steps currently being taken to address this decline are in line with good practice. The service's staff target hard to reach marginalised groups using well-considered, planned approaches which seek to extend the library and reading offer to non-traditional library users. These approaches are considered to represent very good practice..

Good use has been made of national opportunities to improve stock and training, with support for both the Big Plus in Libraries initiative and the national Reader Development Network programme. The initiative shown in leading the Scottish Government's Public Library Quality Improvement Fund's pilot into provision for community language groups is regarded as excellent.

Mechanisms are in place to identify the changing profile of reading needs, in particular with regard to the needs of literacies learners and readers with community language needs. The offer to readers is rich and varied, with a wide range of reading groups and events for both adults and children. The procurement of a new library management system and evidence based stock management software will help to monitor the performance of stock and will provide information about the effectiveness of the Reader Development Team's annual plan.

The degree of staff commitment to meeting the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups is a key strength of the service. Customer Care Standards, Family Friendly Checklists and Mystery Shoppers are some of the ways in which the management team is improving levels of customer care. Involvement in projects such as the local studies research carried out with adults with learning difficulties, the Kemback Reading Group, and Time Tram Dundee and 2007 Dundee City of Discovery Picture Book Award all contribute to building a sense of local identity and represent excellent practice.

The services offered have important strengths which have a positive impact and this is clearly evidenced in feedback from the public. In both indicators there is some excellent practice but, in particular, in indicator 3, some major changes including the procurement of a new library management system is in progress, and improvements to service are yet to be made. As part of the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix self evaluation, 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.

<i>Quality Indicator 3 Meeting readers' needs</i>	
<i>Identification of reading interests</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Choice of activities and resources</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy</i>	<i>Very good</i>

<i>Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values</i>	
<i>Sense of identity and prided in the civic space</i>	<i>Very good</i>
<i>Reception and atmosphere</i>	<i>Good</i>
<i>Customer service</i>	<i>Very good</i>

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

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 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

Dundee City Council serves the fourth largest city in Scotland, with a population of 142,000. Located in a compact area on the east coast of Scotland, on the north side of the Tay river, the city is building a strong biomedical and technological industrial base, quite different from the 'jute, jam and journalism' industrial past. The cultural and arts provision is thriving. The city has attracted significant numbers of workers from new European member states, presenting new challenges particularly in terms of providing language material.

Significant challenges for regeneration remain in terms of health, housing, literacy and learning. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2006, Dundee has a 5% share of Scotland's 15% most deprived data zones.

According to the latest figures produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, Dundee sits 6th in Scotland in terms of books available per 1000 population. Audit Scotland's figures report that visits to libraries in Dundee are increasing, and the percentage of the resident population who are using libraries to borrow books and the number of library borrowers are holding steady. As well as 13 community libraries, Dundee City Council also provides a Central Library located in a shopping mall and a housebound service. The mobile library complements the community library service and makes around 120 stops in a two week period.

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. The Dundee City library staff chose to look at Quality Indicator 3 Meeting reader's needs and Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values. Two groups were established to focus on the separate indicators and staff were encouraged to collect evidence about outcomes and impact and these were presented to SLIC.

SLIC reviewed the evidence and carried out discussions with members of staff, the public and the management team on 14th February and 5th March 2008. Visits were made to the Central Library, the Hub and Broughty Ferry Library. Time was spent talking to members of the public about the service they received. This included peer support networks in local studies and ICT skills development, as well as a local nursery visiting for a story time and a Bookstart event at Broughty Ferry. These arrangements helped SLIC to come to a balanced view on the outcome of the self evaluation.

Quality Indicator 3 Meeting readers' needs

Strengths

- Wide range of reading initiatives across the age-groups
- Sharing reader development skills across staff
- Planned approaches to target hard to reach and marginalised groups
- Scottish Government's Public Library Quality Improvement Fund's pilot into provision for community language groups
- Strong local partnerships
- Personal Shopper initiative

Identification of reading needs

The Library and Information Strategy for 2007/2008 clearly embeds reading and the development of literacy across all service points. A Reader Development Team is responsible for engagement with all age groups to increase reading confidence, enjoyment and to offer opportunities to share reading experiences. Working to an annual plan, the RDT reports progress to the strategic management group. At the time of the SLIC visits, the RDT acknowledged that the outcome of the self evaluation would be constrained by a number of factors including the procurement of a new library management system, the implementation of plans to introduce the use of evidence based stock management software and intention to review the stock policy and management plan. These will all contribute to integrate the various strands of provision for readers and to set targets for the future. A Stock Management group has been established with work targets to take forward.

Dundee City Council staff have been active participants in national Reader development Network since its inception. This programme has provided considerable benefits in terms of specialised training and participation in national reading promotions. The quality of the display work in Dundee is of a high standard and reader development skills have been cascaded to other members of staff in local training events. It is important to continue to carry out cascade training to refresh skills, share new ideas and to ensure that new members of staff have appropriate skills.

The library website offers 24/7 access to the library catalogue. This allows readers to select, renew and place reservations for titles remotely. The new library management system will offer greater functionality and provide more management information, which may be used on the website, for example lists of 'top ten' borrowed items. The website has a good range of links to recommended reading websites with deep links back to the Dundee library catalogue to facilitate direct access to books. The reading websites are included in reader events and ICT taster sessions so that readers become familiar with them. There is a charge for reservations so the number of requests per 1000 population is low. The number of requests which involve Inter Library Loans is very small. A recent pilot study with Publishing Scotland explored the purchase of Scottish material in public libraries. As a result of the study it was clear that staff were effective at selecting material which appealed to borrowers.

Resources are procured in line with Council policy. Community libraries have budget for their resources which community library staff select. Other items such as Scottish material, large print items and top 10 items is carried out centrally. All libraries have a well-signposted Scottish section of books.

Choice of activities and resources

Stock rotation has been in place for some time to refresh stock available locally. Regular input of different items offers readers choice and progression, however this is limited by service capacity.

A range of events for babies and toddlers are widely promoted including Bookstart, Bookstart Plus and Bookstart My Treasure Chest. The Annual Report shows increasing levels of babies joining libraries and taking part in events. Provision is being made to offer books in languages other than English to balance development of fluency in English with confidence in reading aloud to one's child.

Count Me In is a partnership literacy and numeracy project with the Clydesdale Bank and the Early Years and Childcare Teams.

Summer reading schemes continue to attract support. There are a number of Homework Clubs which take place in libraries with input from teacher tutors financed by the Education department. These are aimed at the upper years in primary schools but attract both older and younger children. Promotion of reading to young people also includes class visits and this is well used by local schools. The Lads and Dads reading initiative was not as successful as hoped but the outcomes will be reviewed by the RDT and lessons learned. A Family Fun Day using a circus theme and the BBC's RaW (Read and Write) campaign attracted more support from the public. Reading Champions visit schools with the aim of attracting lapsed or non-users into uptake of a range of library services. Another highly successful event for children was the midnight launch party for the final Harry Potter book. There are 2 reading groups for children based at the Central Library and 2 in community libraries. Staff give talks to senior pupils during the summer term, to recommend suitable book choices for their Specialist Study Project. They are delighted to find that many pupils then visit their local library to borrow the recommended books.

Adults have access to a range of activities promoting reading. A programme of displays for the year is worked out by staff and there is healthy competition between staff over the attractiveness and success of these displays. Staff are involved in the facilitation of 15 reading groups for adults. Providing this number of reading groups with multiple copies of contemporary reading material is a significant commitment. Whilst most of the groups are generic, there are 3 groups for readers with literacies learning needs, one which specialises in crime fiction, another 'virtual' reading group for housebound readers. The reading groups produce reviews which are available on the library website. Live Literature Scotland provides funding to assist with around 12 author visits per year and regeneration funding has been used to fund an additional 6 events. The authors represent a range of genres and include Scottish and local writers. Three readers' days have successfully been held, 2 at Broughty Ferry and 1 at Arthursstone. These events give readers the chance to meet authors and, very importantly, an opportunity to talk about their reading experiences with other readers. A Reader of the Year Award has taken place. The local branch of Waterstone's, the bookshop chain, has helped support events with books.

Provision for readers

The libraries visited were bright and spacious with good signage and attractive displays. At Broughty Ferry a baby rhymetime was well-attended and the babies and adults displayed obvious enjoyment. Other visitors continued using the library facilities, which included computers, coffee and an exhibition. A nursery class was visiting the children's department of the Central Library for a storytime and again, it was clear that several activities could be accommodated at the same time without different customer groups feeling disrupted.

One of the strengths of the service is its outreach work with hard to reach and marginalised groups. These activities often go on unrecognized by the public until they have specific need, Dundee City Council's Library and Information Service delivers 55 customised collections to the residents of nursing homes. The hospital service is run by volunteers with the librarians working in the housebound service giving advice. A 'Books on Prescription' pilot has been launched in 2 libraries and 2 medical practices and uptake is steady. If the outcomes of the pilot continue to be positive, the scheme will be extended. Tayside Managed Care Society and the health board are interested in working with libraries to explore library support for those with mental health issues and development work is on-going.

In 2007/8 the Council were successful in securing funding from the Scottish Government's Public Library Quality Improvement Fund to provide library support for socially vulnerable groups in Dundee including migrant workers and those with substance abuse. Self service terminals were installed to release staff from basic administrative tasks, allowing them time to develop reading groups encouraging literacy and verbal communication skills. Other group activities were also planned and delivered.

The service can offer assistance to those who have visual impairment. Staff are interested in exploring how the existing range of accessibility aids can be promoted and improved. There is a small demand for texts in Braille so these are provided.

New crèche facilities have been provided to allow more people to access the activities and events offered by the library. This will allow work with more vulnerable groups and takes into accounts the needs of some of the more isolated members of communities. Underpinning the outreach work is a framework of strong local partnerships with a range of other council colleagues, the voluntary sector, health agencies and local charities.

In what is thought to represent unique practice, Dundee Library and Information Services offer a Personal Shopper service for readers. Forms are available in libraries for sign up for the service which offers to save time by offering a pre-selected range of material, or to widen reading experiences.

Areas for improvement

- Reviewing the stock policy and management plan
- Introducing the new library management system
- Introducing evidence based stock management
- Continuing to improve use of management information
- Continuing consultation to ensure services are meeting needs

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values

Strengths

- Local cultural identity projects such as Kemback Reading Group, Time Tram Dundee and 2007 Dundee City of Discovery Picture Book Award
- Development of Customer Service Standards
- Self evaluation of Library and Information Services initiatives
- Staff commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals and groups, and bringing them into library use
- Use of Family Friendly Checklists

Sense of identity

An extensive self-evaluation exercise was carried out over a two year period reviewing reviewing provision of books and information in the community and central libraries. The outcomes of the review were used to inform strategic objectives. The self evaluation was a very detailed look at provision, covering activities such as the accessibility of information services to minority ethnic communities to a detailed breakdown by service point of display work, condition of stock and activities. As a result the staff have been working to develop more user-centric services. Some self service terminals have been introduced to release staff time to support public use of facilities. Sometimes this has resulted in ICT tasters sessions, local history and cultural identity activities, the development of reading for enjoyment and improving literacy or building partnerships with community groups.

A group from the Kemback Adult Resource Centre have been researching the history of the Kemback Street area in the Arthurstone Community Library. Resources used included local history resource, websites such as SCRAN and Photopolis and newspaper articles. Visits were organised to the Verdant Works, the Barrack Street Museum, the local studies department in central Library and the Tayside Family History Centre. The research culminated in an attractive display. The feedback shows that the enthusiasm of the group members all of whom have learning difficulties never waned and that it helped them to understand their local community and culture.

Two other excellent projects in which the service have been involved are the Time Tram, a history of Dundee aimed at school children funded by the Heritage Lottery, and the 2007 Dundee City of Discovery Picture Book Award Book initiatives involved the libraries staff in wide partnerships with publishers, education staff, pupils, authors, illustrators, booksellers, funders and sponsors. The projects help children, young people and adults to develop a range of skills, build a sense of citizenship and cultural identity.

Reception and atmosphere

Staff are committed to the delivery of services in a neutral and welcoming environment. Some of the buildings have been modernised using regeneration or capital funding. Staff have made attractive displays promoting reading and activities. Where possible tea and coffee facilities are offered and comfortable seating is provided to encourage readers to spend time in the library. Whilst there is limited space, there is a willingness to share space with other services. Six libraries have integrated community facilities. Opening hours are being considered in discussions with unions and staff with a view to providing more access for the public.

The Customer Service Standards include guidelines on welcoming new members of the public to the library and information service. Facilities are well signposted and zoned so that they are well used by their target groups. Observation showed that the libraries visited had a good atmosphere with positive relationships between the staff and public. A good range of the public use the libraries including mothers and toddlers, children and young people, educational establishments and adults browsing, and using information services or computers. Through partnerships it has been possible to offer specialist access for vulnerable members of the public to learning activities. This requires dedicated staff support and has resulted in both the library and the individuals concerned benefiting. This specialised outreach work with literacies learners, adults with learning difficulties, those in drug and alcohol recovery or the socially isolated because of language is regarded as excellent practice.

Customer Service

From the self-evaluation exercise staff identified the need to improve access to information and reading for minority ethnic communities. Community information leaflets are now available in a range of community languages. In 2007/8 Dundee City Council library staff volunteered to lead a national study funded by the Scottish Government into provision by library services. The self evaluation found that, overall, staff are helpful and welcoming to users but that there was room for improvement in some areas such as display work and promoting new initiatives.

The housebound service is run by two dedicated members of the library staff and they provide a very personalised service, based on a dialogue with customers. This service has its own budget and has capacity for around 310 customers who receive a visit and exchange of reading materials every 3 weeks.

Family friendly checklists are used by staff to assess venues. Using a simple three level scoring system, staff have sought to identify improvements required to raise the standard of libraries as venues for family learning. The aim is for all libraries to provide a warm welcome and a bright, comfortable children's area. The area for improvement which was identified was in the assessment of feedback from families on services and facilities. At the time of the exercise, evaluation was mainly quantitative. Visitors are now encouraged to make comments and suggestions. Work continues to develop more qualitative methods.

Customer Service Standards have been developed by a team, with input from the staff. There is a clear and concise information leaflet for the public. This is complemented by full guidelines for staff covering appearance, customer service, dealing with complaints and organisation of the library. Mystery shoppers are used to monitor the effectiveness of the Customer Service Standards. The mystery shoppers are adult learner volunteers who have a set of scenarios to use in the community libraries. A Safe Place for Children and Young People was developed in response to staff concern, in partnership with schools and social work, and this provides the policy framework for working with younger customers. Staff working with children and young people have received dyslexia awareness training and this will be delivered to the wider staff group.

Customer care training starts in the induction programme and, together with a wide range of training needs, continues to be provided for through staff development course. Dundee City Council are key stakeholders in the Tayside and Fife Library and Information Network (TAFLIN) who are important providers of specialist, local training. Staff have access to a list of mandatory and optional courses to develop their competencies. Staff are asked to identify the impact on the service of their attendance at any particular course. Greater sharing of skills and knowledge through cascade training could be developed. Over 90% of staff have passed their European Computer Driving Licence and this gives them both confidence and competence when delivering ICT taster sessions. These sessions often involve individual tuition tailored to the specific needs of customers. There is a dedicated weekly training hour. Job descriptions were last reviewed around 3 years ago.

Customer feedback is sought on a regular basis. There are online complaint forms and these are responded to within the agreed number of days. Complaints often concern buildings rather than services. There are around 140,000 enquiries answered per year, according to CIPFA's 2006/7 Public Library Statistics. The most recent non-customer survey was part of the 2005 Best Value Review. Feedback was sought from a mobile library located in City Square but it attracted interest mainly from regular customers or visitors to the city. The two Public Library Quality Improvement projects included extensive discussions with marginalised groups and the outcomes have helped to change service provision.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to seek opportunities to improve buildings and improve interiors
- Continue to develop more qualitative methods of evaluation
- Ensure cascade training is carried out where appropriate
- Continue to seek ways of consulting with customers

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