

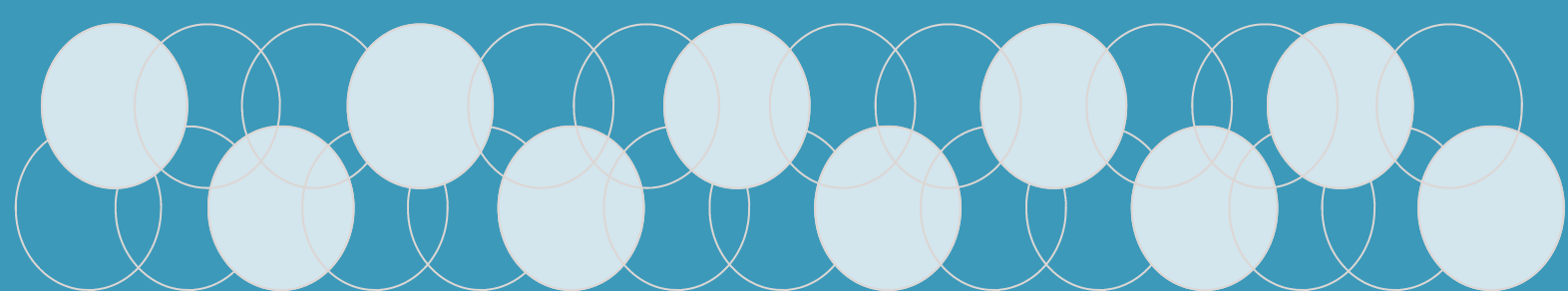


Scottish Library & Information Council



Orkney Library and Archive self evaluation 2009

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM)



Summary

Orkney Islands Council Library and Archive staff used the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) to review its provision across all seven Quality Indicators. From detailed discussions with staff, the public and a wide range of stakeholders; visits to libraries and mobiles; and a review of the evidence, it is clear that the Library and Archive staff are working hard to ensure 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 community networks and informal opportunities to develop and deliver new services to meet the needs of communities. Feedback from the public and stakeholders clearly shows that whilst the services are highly valued by their users, the facilities in Stromness are in need of development. This is currently being addressed by the Council.

Services have important strengths which are having positive impact on individuals, and community life. Key strengths lie in Community and Personal Participation, Meeting Readers' Needs, Ethos and Values and Organisation and Use of Resources and Space. These include the mobile library service, the podcast talking newspaper, the range of reading opportunities for children and adults, customer care and the range of volunteering experiences. The successful integration of the Archive in the Kirkwall building has led to excellent co-operation and the customer-centred access to local heritage, whether it is for biodiversity, family history or the rich island literary heritage is regarded as excellent practice.

Other important strengths include the use of the media, the award winning website, the range of online subscription services available in a small authority and the championing of 'no barrier' services. Quality Indicator 4, which looks at Learner's Experiences, is constrained by the lack of appropriate learning spaces and staff capacity. OIC should consider, given the under-use of the education resources, distributing the collection to schools for sharing and re-using the space in Kirkwall library for learning. Feedback from the visits clearly shows that whilst the services are highly valued by their users, there are a number of issues for OIC to consider: staff capacity as the service has significantly lower staffing levels than other authorities serving very remote, rural populations and corporate IT barriers mainly in the form of staff capacity to implement new IT services and annual maintenance charges which are not in line with other councils. There is further opportunity for OIC to integrate more shared services which support council information, lifelong learning, employability skills development and community capacity building effectively through the Library and Archive.

As part of the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix, 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.

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information	
<i>Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources</i>	Good
<i>Arrangements for access</i>	Satisfactory
<i>Staff interaction and support</i>	Satisfactory

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

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

Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences	
<i>Extent to which the environment stimulates and motivates learners</i>	Satisfactory
<i>The range of learning opportunities</i>	Satisfactory
<i>Provision for learners with differing abilities and aptitudes</i>	Satisfactory
<i>Partnerships enabling progression with others</i>	Satisfactory

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

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

Quality Indicator 7 Leadership	
<i>Vision and policy making</i>	Satisfactory
<i>Planning for improvement</i>	Satisfactory
<i>Innovation</i>	Good
<i>Management of change</i>	Good

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 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

Orkney Islands Council is the smallest and second most northerly of the 32 local authorities in Scotland. A total population of around 20,000 is scattered over more than 70 or so islands and skerries, 19 of which are inhabited. Kirkwall (7000) and Stromness (2000) are the main centres of population with the remainder of the islands sparsely populated. This poses considerable challenges for service delivery and creates pressure to sustain services to small, geographically isolated communities.

Orkney has a unique local culture and strong sense of community. The local community plan, 'Orkney 2020 – Our Vision' sets out 6 key principles including 'promoting survival'. Survival is a very real issue to a remote island community, with the declining population trend reversed due to a rise in inward migration to mainland Orkney. The smaller islands have experienced depopulation, with notably greater numbers of people over 45 and fewer

young people. Depopulation of the isles and changes in the population's age profile are taken into account in the provision of public services including library services.

The main service point is in Kirkwall, which incorporates a Learning Centre offering free internet access. Stromness is served by a part-time branch library due to be replaced by a new building within the next few years. Mobile library services are a vital part of service provision and visit both the rural mainland and outer isles regularly. Library and computer usage, both public access and in the home, are among the highest in Scotland.

The Orkney Library & Archive, together with Arts, Museums & Heritage and Sports & Leisure form the Leisure and Culture sector of Education & Leisure services.

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. Orkney Library and Archive staff chose to look at the entire range of seven service indicators: Quality Indicator 1 Access to information, Quality Indicator 2 Community and personal participation, Quality Indicator 3 Meeting readers' needs and Quality Indicator 4 Learners experiences, Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values, Quality Indicator 6 Organisation and use of resource and space, and Quality Indicator 7 Leadership. This was a considerable undertaking but staff felt that it would inform the service planning. Staff worked together to identify and evaluate evidence about the impact and outcomes and their findings were presented to SLIC.

SLIC reviewed the evidence and carried out discussions with members of staff, a wide variety of partners, the public and the management team on 17th and 18th June 2009. Visits were made to Stromness Library and the mobile library.

SLIC would also like to thank all those who participated. Time was spent talking to members of the public, councillors and the wide range of partners about the service they receive. These arrangements helped SLIC to come to a balanced view on the outcome of the self-evaluation.

Quality Indicator 1 Access to information

Strengths

- Quality of website and information systems
- Use of web 2.0 technologies in promoting services and reaching into communities
- Newspaper podcast
- Assistive technologies

Sufficiency, range and suitability of resources

The new library in Kirkwall is well planned and provides accommodation for a range of local partners as well as the Archive. The Orkney Library and Archive website is attractive and well designed, providing full information about the services offered. The website was awarded a Gold Star for its quality. The website and systems are managed locally and this gives greater flexibility to tailor them to customer needs and to respond quickly to change. The Library uses the Talis Library Management System and the online catalogue uses Talis Prism so Library members can browse, reserve and renew items remotely 24/7. Customer service enhancement is also behind the planned provision of an out of hours return point.

Library members have access to a wide range of online subscription services to support their homework, leisure interests or study. Electronic services include Britannica Online, with adult, student and children's editions, KnowUK, NewsUK and Scran. The promotion of Oxford Online subscription services includes high-visibility links from the Library website to the Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and Reference Online. This is a very well considered way in which to highlight the richness of these services and provide shortcuts for customers. There are also a number of links to useful web-based resources such as www.scottishreaders.net. This helps to support the move from print based to online services.

Orkney Library and Archive is doing a remarkable job in preserving and promoting local heritage and culture. However, the staff have embraced the very latest technology to reach their customers and realise that this is a potentially global market. The local paper is prepared in audio format, as it is in many places, but the staff have turned this into a regular podcast downloadable from the Library website. This is thought to be unique practice and is a fabulous way for the Orkney diaspora or those who cannot easily visit the Library or read a paper to keep in touch with the community. The principle area of direct enquiry is around local studies and archives. Local information is collected in collaboration with partners. Council information is available online.

Arrangements for access

Public access computers in Kirkwall provide the main point of free broadband access on the islands. There is high use by both residents and visitors and a rolling programme of replacement is in place, with full replacement over a 4 year period. Although around 75% of the population have access to PCs at home, some choose to use the Library pcs when they are in Kirkwall for work or shopping and the percentage of population with access to PCs drops to 54% for the over 60s. They are also a section of the population who regularly seek the support of skilled staff with ICT training. The use of microwave technology for internet access is unreliable and access is sometimes unavailable.

Work is ongoing on the roll-out and encouraging the uptake of the National Entitlement Card which will provide access to the range of Library services and transactions. Access has been improved by additional funding of £7k, secured from Fairer Scotland, which is being used to purchase assistive technologies.

Staff are using web 2.0 technologies to push information about the service and its value out into the local and global markets. Using twitter, facebook, RSS feeds and a blog, services are continually promoted and highlighted in a friendly and informal manner. These are highly informative and effective but cost-efficient promotional tools. They reflect an interest in new markets and introducing customers to the value of social networks.

Staff interaction and support

All staff are involved in information work and this helps to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. Knowledge of sources to answer information queries and the appropriate customer care skills starts with the staff induction and is continued in the Learning Centre training in checklist and manual. Staff are trained in listening and responding. However, there is no complacency about the need for staff skills to continue to be challenged and update and library customer care training is planned, as a result of feedback from the employee development and review process. Another area for further development is the use of ILAs. This will help the Council's employability agenda. The staff training budget needs to be reconsidered to maintain the current high level of staff skills, which is important if the public's ICT needs are to continue to be supported.

One concern is the particularly high charge levied by the IT department for the IT services rendered. The costs included central charges and seem out of step with other Scottish local authorities. This makes every IT change including the installation and upgrade of public access pcs prohibitively high, impacting on the service's ability to modernise. Wi-fi equipment has been available for sometime but low levels of support means that the live launch of the system has been delayed.

Areas for improvement

- Charge levied by local IT department for services
- Use of microwave technology is unreliable
- Managing access to pcs would be improved by better use of online booking system

Quality Indicator 2 Personal and community participation

Strengths

- Mobile library service
- Integrated working with Archives
- Range of partnership working and its impact on customer experience
- Facilities in Kirkwall
- Orkney songs initiative

Promoting personal and community development

A range of surveys and customer feedback helps to inform the Orkney Library and archive about community interests and needs. These include a special survey for the PLQIM process and the Best Value survey. The PLQIM survey showed high levels of satisfaction with provision, with a small degree of unhappiness expressed about the number of new books and the space and layout.

The Orkney Library and Archive offers a wider range of different ways in which local residents can get involved and contribute positively to their community, whilst developing their own skills. This is most ably demonstrated by the widespread use of volunteers in capturing and recording local culture and heritage. Volunteers are welcomed by the service. This means that many of the resources of local and family interest, which are still being collected and donated on a daily basis, can be recorded and made available. Volunteers are highly valued members of the staff team and treated on a equal footing. One volunteer simply said that her involvement had 'saved her life', giving her focus and meaning following bereavement.

Providing community space

The main service point is the Orkney Library & Archive located in Kirkwall, which opened in 2003. It is a thoughtfully planned building which provides space for a range of community partners as well as the Library and Archive. Whilst Stromness has limited facilities it does have a small exhibition room on the first floor for use by community groups. Kirkwall has an excellent space in MacGillivray Room on the first floor with adjacent catering facilities. This allows for a wide range of community uses.

Mobile library services are crucial to communities, visiting most parts of islands on a regular basis. The mobile library service is a key strength of the service. Almost all of the customers get a doorstep service because of the nature of the community. Careful profiles of the reading interests of each resident on the routes are maintained, which is very helpful for providing a quality services and also for continuity in should relief drivers be asked to cover routes. Many of the customers are so isolated that the mobile library assistant is the only person they speak to for days at a time and for many, the mobile library drivers are the only direct contact customers have with OIC staff.

Access to community heritage and culture

The co-location of the Library and Archive offers customers an excellent service. From the planning stage, the archive and important community partners were included in the development. The many visitors to Orkney which are interested in the islands, their history, heritage, culture and genealogical matters find all the key partners in one place. The Archive is a very attractive space and has very good facilities for study and research. The local family history society, talking newspaper and bio-diversity officer are not only on site but are included in the space as equal partners not afterthoughts. The inclusion of the Orkney Biodiversity Records Centre in the premises is, as far we can be discovered, unique. It offers visitors as well as residents a rich source of information about the local environment. This is helpful for visitors interested in the islands and their environment, researchers, school children carrying out projects related to the curriculum or for environmental planning.

Material of local and family interest is being donated on a daily basis and this has to be sifted through, recorded and made available through the catalogue. Volunteers make a real difference to the speed with which this is done. They are given training and enjoy their tasks.

The Photographic Archive, also located within the main building Kirkwall, has over 50,000 images relating to Orkney and its people. Some of these images date back to the early nineteenth century and they record changes to life in Orkney. They show changes in the working and social lives, changes in farming, the impact of the two World Wars and the huge influx of military personnel, industries that have largely disappeared and much more. As well as being a rich resource for browsing and research, the co-location means that visitors can get prints easily.

The Orkney Sound Archive also has a huge range of recordings including oral history from the 1950's onwards. The Big Orkney Song Project is a two year project set up to collect, catalogue and record Orkney songs and run by Orkney Singers. They are creating the Big Orkney Song Collection, which people can have free access to through the Orkney Library and Archive.

Staff knowledge and skills are of a very high standard. The local tourist information centre is located close by and there is a steady stream of visitors to the service for information and research. Good relationships between Library staff, archivists and volunteers are key to the success of this service.

Orkney has a rich cultural heritage and the range of renowned local writers is well promoted. The George Mackay Brown writing fellow is based at Stromness Library, in a partnership part-funded by the Scottish Arts Council and Orkney Islands Council. There is potential to develop services here but space is very tight and a new facility would allow this to be developed into a vibrant centre for visitors and researchers.

Areas for improvement

- Improve space available at Stromness to meet needs of the community

Quality Indicator 3 Meeting readers' needs**Strengths**

- Access to a wide range of reading-related activities in very remote rural communities
- Promotion of local writers
- Poetry Partner initiative

Identification of reading needs

The Talis library management system is being used to introduce some evidence based stock management approaches. This will build towards better use of stock through stock rotation and removing stock which is not used or no longer meets the quality control standards. It will also inform manage stock selection and provide a closer match to customer's reading interests.

Library users are invited to submit requests for material that is no currently stocked by the Library. Demand for titles is stimulated by promoting new titles and lists of top ten book sales in a variety of categories on the Library website. Social networking tools are also well used for promotion.

Choice of activities and resources

Support for reading is strong on both Orkney and Shetland and are an important part of island life in both communities. According to Audit Scotland's reports on Cultural and Community services, visits to libraries increased by over 13,000 in 2007/8 on the previous year; however, the number of items issued has fallen. The percentage of the population who are 'active borrowers', that is they have borrowed at least one item in a 12 month period, is the much higher than the Scottish average and is second only to Shetland.

The displays of stock in Kirkwall are of high standard, bringing titles to the attention of the casual browser. There is a strong focus on local writers, many of whom are internationally renowned. The Poetry Partner and George Mackay Brown fellow are other ways of engaging with readers and writers.

Provision for children and young people starts with Bookstart, and the Library gives out packs at 5 and 13 months. The service also distributes the Bookstart pack for 3 year olds, Treasure Chest. Bookstart Rhymetimes are held twice a month at Kirkwall. This is part of a national scheme which includes action rhymes for babies and toddlers and is exceedingly popular with young Library users and their parents or carers. Regular storytimes are held for young readers. Older children are encouraged to contribute their book reviews to the Library website, linking reading, writing and appreciation from an early stage. Teenagers have their own provision with a balance between reading and study. Links are made to online resources to assist with homework and study. Teenage collections include graphic and manga formats and the audio collection includes mp3 files.

There are 3 main reading groups. The Wednesday lunchtime group has been meeting for over 5 years and their reading record is on the website. It shows a wider range of reading

interests and shows how reading groups can extend reading choices, drawing readers to choices from different genres and to the unexpected. Authors range from new writers, Scottish writers to best sellers and international award-winners. The Stromness group is also long established and caters for a similar wide range of tastes. In the last year, a new group, Monday Night Murders, has been established at Kirkwall. The group meets monthly and caters for those with a love of crime fiction. Again, the web information provides a rich reading list for anyone, even if they aren't able to join in the group discussions. Linking these groups using web 2.0 technologies might further extend participation in discussions.

Health and wellbeing information is included for readers. The Library offers a bibliotherapy reading programme, including titles for young people.

Provision for readers

Geographic remoteness is addressed in a number of ways, so that it is not a barrier to participation in reading. The two mobile libraries are deployed, one to mainland Orkney and the other to the Isles and South Ronaldsay. They cover around 70 communities on a monthly basis. Both mobiles routes are on the Library website and are also announced daily on BBC Radio Orkney between 7.30am and 8.00am Monday to Friday, where any cancellations due to weather conditions or other reasons will also be announced. Book boxes are available on request for smaller communities and for housebound. Requests can be placed online via the Library catalogue and these are sent out to readers.

One initiative seeking to place reading materials in the hands of the public is the book collections on ferries. This allows ferry travellers to relax with a book during their crossings and further literacy and personal development.

Provision for customers who are developing their reading fluency and literacy skills is made through a range of *Quick Reads*. The service participated in the *Six Book Challenge* and the promotion did help to bring in new members.

Areas for improvement

- Charges are inequitable and barrier to lifelong learners

Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences

Strengths

- Partnership working
- Informal learning environment in the Library

The library learning environment

The number of learners accessing online services via the Library computers is increasing. The number of log-ins has more than doubled between 2005/6 and 2007/8. The percentage of population using the computers is considerably higher than in any other part of Scotland at nearly 40% of the population; and is nearly four times the Scottish average.

Space in the Library learning environment is restricted and this contrasts with the infrequently used space in the education resource are on the first floor of the building. SLIC suggests that better use would be made of the facilities and resources if the project boxes are distributed to schools, where they are more likely to be used if they are on site and can

be exchanged between schools using the Library catalogue to manage requests. That would release the space and a this could be used as a reference and study space. The adjoining community room is already used for exams and testing so a quiet space would fit well with the ethos. The current ground floor reference space could then be used for a learning centre and the whole lifelong learning and employability agenda could be advanced in partnership with council departments and external partners.

Range of learning

Learning opportunities are detailed in the 2007/08 Evening Classes and other Adult Learning programmes. Broadband uptake is high but sometimes unreliable. As elsewhere, the interest in ICT skills development is good. The range of learning is restricted by staff capacity to provide support for drop-in use, one to one training and group work. The staff are currently exploring how best to take this forward. Initiatives include evening sessions when the Library is closed to the public, using volunteers as computer *buddies* and *Learning Link*.

Opportunities are promoted and well signposted by the service. Independent learning and personal development is supported by the provision of print materials, web based tools and the online subscription services. On a few occasions, Library staff have worked alongside adult learning tutors, which helps to build a shared understanding.

Addressing the needs of learners

Library staff contribute to the range of local learning partnership and keep an overview of provision to meet learning needs. An education resource collection is held in Kirkwall but this is infrequently used. The collection is in the form of topic boxes and, with the changes in Curriculum for Excellence, this approach may need reconsideration. Patterns of use in other Scottish services indicate that schools need individually tailored resources to better support learning.

In an extension of their volunteering programme, the Library offers work experience opportunities for those who need extra support or who are harder to place.

Partnership working in learning

Orkney Library and Archive works in partnership to deliver support for learners and is balancing providing learning direct to customers and staffing capacity. More partnership working with the Council's Adult Learning Service is planned. Libraries provide premises, ICT facilities and resources. The learning role of staff is very much one of facilitating and assisting. There are extensive adult learning opportunities provided across Orkney Islands by the council's Adult Learning team, Orkney College, partners, U3A (the university of the third age), UHI or local voluntary organisations. The Library has a good profile with learners and partner organisations and should work to convey the message that the Library offers informal learning which is broad, free and inclusive.

Areas for improvement

- Lack of adequate learning space in Kirkwall restricts development
- Educational resources are under-used and support for schools needs to be reconsidered in the light of Curriculum for Excellence

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values

Strengths

- Support from the local community

Sense of identity and pride in the civic space

The Orkney Library and Archive has developed a strong brand. The service uses this brand across its web 2.0 tools. The Best value Report highlighted that the Library and Archive felt 'marginalised' within the Council structure and senior managers should ensure that the service is fully integrated into council policy development and deployment so that services have cohesion and avoid duplication of effort.

As mentioned earlier, visits to libraries increased by over 13,000 in 2007/8 on the previous year; this compares to indoor sport facilities visits which, though higher is falling and significantly more than pools or museums. Customer feedback is good and this is evident from the regular surveys. Local councillors are also Library members and use facilities on a regular basis, and the Library is regarded positively in elected member comment. There is a concern that the department with responsibility for libraries does not provide the support and resources to match public expectations and needs (see Quality Indicator 6). Although libraries perform well in terms of the Statutory Performance Indicators, they are only a basic indicator and do not demonstrate Library impact. There is a danger that putting too much emphasis on SPIs and losing sight of development needs. When planning the new library proposed for Stromness, SLIC's recommendations for areas for improvement in this report should be taken into account.

Another feature of the Orkney Library and Archive is the range of local art on public display. These include the bronze busts of Orcadian writers in the Archive, a painting of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies by Fred Schley and a quilted wall hanging of Scapa Flow. Stromness has a painting celebrating the local bookseller, with whom the Library has very close links and it is good to see this relationship marked in such a beautiful way by Calum Morrison.

Reception and atmosphere

There is no doubt that the Library and Archive building in Kirkwall is suitable for a modern library service. It has a lovely atmosphere and efforts have been made to make the building as comfortable as possible, with tea and coffee facilities, comfortable seating and attractive displays. There is a good range of community information on display. At Stromness, the staff have to achieve a difficult balance between providing access to a wide range of reading materials and leaving enough room for the public to browse and study in comfort. Ground floor facilities are fully utilized for access to stock and whilst the available shelf space is limited, every device is used to bring the right book to customers. The recessed windows have reading promotions carefully and attractively displayed and younger readers have their own space, just as they would expect in a larger area. Customers receive a personal welcome in both libraries and on the mobile vans.

Relationships with the local media have resulted in considerable coverage of Library and information events on a regular basis. Not only does this promote specific events but it also builds towards a general message about the welcoming and engaging nature of the Library for all sectors of the community, whatever their abilities or interests.

Customer care

Since the loss of a Council post, customer care training is carried out in-house by Library staff. Staff have a clear understanding of good customer care and this is evident in the Library. Visitors see the quality of staff response as a major strength of the service and this is evident from feedback.

The number of new users is monitored and action is being taken to reverse decreasing numbers. Packs have been distributed to promote services and these have been prepared in Polish and a Chinese version is under consideration.

A range of different measures are in place to attract new customers. For example, the Library foyer has a comfortable seating area for casual use with tea/coffee facilities, local information, displays and exhibitions and local papers. Use at any time during opening hours is welcomed but on Friday afternoons, the incentive of free coffee is offered to attract customers to the Library. During the SLIC visit a local young family were registering for Library membership attracted in by provision for their young children through Bookstart and storytimes. Both had been Library users as children but drifted away. With a young family of their own, they were keen to extend opportunities to their own children and also recognised that the Library had services they would be using themselves; specifically free internet.

Areas for improvement

- Concerns that departmental support do not match customers' needs

Quality Indicator 6 Organisation and use of resources and space

Strengths

- Facilities in Kirkwall
- New mobile library

Accommodation and facilities

The Library and Archive building at Kirkwall is excellent and provides comfortable surroundings for customers, which feedback indicates appreciate and make good use of. The upstairs meeting room provides a flexible space for community use. Another room is available for smaller meetings or, as during the visit, exam use. The co-location of a range of cultural, heritage and archives partners adds richness for the community who have all the main resources in one site. One of the key assets to the building is the provision of proper archival storage conditions so that important items are preserved for future generations.

At the time of the visit, discussions were ongoing about replacing the library at Stromness. The current library is limited in what it can offer the community but its size and layout. Kirkwall is an excellent demonstration to Orkney Islands Council of the value-added to communities by providing community space in libraries. One mobile library van is new and particularly well-suited to the needs of the community. The second van is in need of replacement; and this is planned.

Organisation and promotion of resources and services

Orkney Library and Archive comprises of the main Library and Archive in Kirkwall and the Stromness Library and the two mobile library services. There are also a few book collections to extend the reading choice in more isolated areas. The main Library is open 54 hours per week and efforts are made to extend access to services via the 24/7 services available via the Library catalogue. Stock is refreshed regularly to enhance collections. Good collection-building needs sustained investment and any deterioration in the range or quantity of stock is soon noticed by regular users.

The Stock Management Policy is in place and there are proposals to extend the current early steps into the use of evidence based stock management to improve the quality of the stock purchased. Collections on mobile libraries, the provision for the housebound and talking books and newspapers are extensively used in both the more urban areas and the remote rural and island communities.

There is recognition that marketing is important although there is not a formal plan. As with other island services, there are good links with the local newspapers and radio to reach out to customers. It is important to recognise that marketing seeks to convey the message that the Library is an essential part of people's lives and widely accessible, rather than promotion of stand-alone events. As mentioned in the section on QI3, the Library displays are of a high standard and regularly topped-up and changed. Guiding in the Library is clear.

The one concern is the under-used education resource room at Kirkwall which might be better used for other community purposes.

Deployment of skilled staff

The staff number 19.5 FTE are deployed across the service, including 2 on the mobiles. This compares with Shetland's 30 FTE, with a difference around 3000 more in terms of population in Shetland although the staffing complement also includes school library staff in Shetland's case. The senior management team have clear roles and have developed expertise in specialist areas, such as reader development, systems management, young people's services and archives.

The Orkney Library and Archive makes good use of its staff, although staffing levels are minimal. This means, for example, that staff are not able to meet the demands of customers for more IT and learning support. Volunteers are used widely throughout the service and are valued members of the team. Whilst opportunities to volunteer are good, it should not disguise the fact that the service is two professional posts short. The service is dependent on the goodwill of its staff who are often working beyond their job descriptions.

Keeping staff training at a level with other mainland library services presents considerable challenges for the service and represents a key area of investment for the Council, so it was disappointing to discover that, in some cases, staff are using their own ILAs to access basic training. Some staff are currently undertaking their ECDL IT training. Professional engagement is supported and staff are able to participate in a wide range of professional events, such as Heads of Public Library Services meetings and the Readership Development Network. There are good partnerships with other Orcadian agencies who can help to develop skills.

Use of funding

External funding is regularly sought and sometimes successfully attained. Examples include the Fairer Scotland funding for assistive technologies and the external funding partnership

which enriches cultural experiences in Stromness through the George Mackay brown wrting fellowship. Between the SLIC visit earlier in the year, the Orkney Library and Archive has applied for and been awarded funding by the Scottish Government's Public Library Quality Improvement Fund to help with the development of learning services. Priorities for new developments are considered on a year-on-year basis.

SLIC recognises that the service is making good use of the funding available but is concerned that budget reductions may impact on the funding available for materials for public use. It is important that the service gives serious consideration to improving the performance of stock. Greater emphasis should be placed on making each book 'work harder' and this will provide improved value for money for the OIC.

Areas for improvement

- Improve space available at Stromness to meet needs of the community

Quality Indicator 7 Leadership

Strengths

- Staff initiatives across a range of services, including reading activities, displays and use of web 2.0

Vision and policy making

The vision for the Library Service is laid out in the Service Plan making clear pledges to customers, including how the service will engage with both customers and staff. The Library has a wide range of partnerships and their inclusion is evident in all strategic and professional planning groups. Partnership with the Library is seen as a positive and many organisations are involved in cooperative projects.

The Best Value Review of 2005 recommended the creation of a Learning Centre and some initial steps have been taken to create a learning space. It is not so much a lack of vision in Orkney but extended timescales which hinder development.

Planning for improvement

Orkney Library and Archive is the only Scottish service who were able to respond to SLIC's question about the percentage of year-old stock which had issued more than 6 times; 92% for fiction and 88% for non-fiction. This is baseline information on which the service can measure improvement using evidence based stock management approaches.

Although the Library and Archive is in a new building, the service is constantly seeking new ways of improving services. Customers are regularly consulted about the service they receive and invited to make suggestions. The Pickaquoy Centre is the local sports, arts, leisure and cinema complex. Staff have made the most of the opportunity to attract new customers by placing a collection of books in the foyer. This could be developed. The Library and Archive blog is another way of changing perceptions of libraries and reaching out to customers. It features, for example a picture of the month and a resource of the month, which is a good way of drawing attention to specific resources and the richness of the collections. The featured resources include explanatory text, conveying the historical context and adding to the reader's understanding.

Technology is already used well in the service but it would be helpful to review what other improvements can help release staff time from back office processes to spend more time supporting customers.

Innovation

There are a range of innovative services to enhance the good range of Library services. In particular, web 2.0 or social networking technologies are put to good use by this small service. The Library's twitter service has over 100 followers who are regularly updated with news and whose interest is drawn to a range of services and products. The facebook pages allow more flexibility for interaction and are also a good way of sharing photographs. Along with the blog, they give users a feeling of immediacy, responsiveness and inclusion.

Future plans include an out of hours return point and a new facility at Stromness, as well as internal changes at Kirkwall to provide better learning facilities.

Management of change

Significant changes have been made in recent years. The previous Library and Archive Manager, Councillor Bobby Leslie, created a fabulous community facility and used the opportunity to bring services together for the benefit of the customer. The current Manager has consolidated the changes and built a more integrated service. Changes are recognised by users and both positive and, occasionally, negative feedback is received. Customers and staff are consulted and invited to make comment in an open and inclusive manner. Communication is good and the use of social networking tools adds an informality and encouragement to contribute. Plans for change over the longer term are shared with staff at appropriate stages and the emphasis is always on the impact on service provision and quality.

In conclusion, this is a small team who are achieving a lot with limited support. Performance is high and there is a positive public perception of the service amongst the public and elected members. A number of innovative service developments have built on existing sound practice to add a vibrant and fresh feel to the service.

Areas for improvement

- Whole departmental approach to advocacy within OIC for support to match customers' needs

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