

# Community engagement in public libraries:

an evaluation update of the Big Lottery Fund's  
Community Libraries Programme

March 2011

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

In November 2010, the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) and Big Lottery (BIG) commissioned Renaisi to undertake an evaluation update of the Communities Library Programme (CLP), which is managed by and funded by the Big Lottery Fund. The £80million programme has funded 58 authorities to refurbish 77 libraries. The funding was mostly capital though there was a requirement for **libraries to actively involve communities in the design, delivery and management of the funded libraries**. To meet this requirement each library submitted a Community Engagement Plan (CEP) describing community engagement activities, outcomes and targets, progress against which was monitored throughout.

This programme does not sit in isolation in terms of the policy issues it is engaging with. The library sector has, for a number of years, been developing its approach to working with users, involving people more and providing new services and roles. This has been matched by a changing usage of libraries by citizens, and the sector has had to respond to this change in demand and patterns of usage.

The aims of the current evaluation were to examine the outcomes and impact in line with the existing evaluation framework for community engagement in public libraries, and to inform policy and practice.

The evaluation was based on the original research design, including a focus on six 'intensive' libraries (including a 'control' library), and sixteen intermediate libraries, and use of a particular theoretical logic chain. Appendices 1 and 2 provide details of the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' libraries.<sup>1</sup>

The methodology involved a review of documentation, completion of self-assessment toolkit, and primary research. The primary research for the six intensive libraries included interviews with library managers, front-line staff, partners, and volunteers. It also included a number of focus groups with community groups, and questionnaires for users.

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<sup>1</sup> The initial evaluation report can be found here: <http://research.mla.gov.uk/evidence/view-publication.php?dm=nrm&pubid=1114>

### Key findings

- The key success of the programme has been to increase, as a result of the programme, **community involvement in libraries** (see paragraph 3.36)
- Involvement in libraries manifests itself in different ways, but the most frequent is individuals volunteering in the **delivery of added value services in the libraries** (3.47)
- At its best, the programme has improved the quality of libraries as platforms of use by the community – involving, engaging and adding value (3.69)
- The inclusion of different spaces to support community activity has seen libraries across the programme becoming hubs of the community in a way that was not previously possible.
- There has been an increase in visits, in part because of the extended spaces. About a quarter of users stated they used the library more, and a similar proportion felt the library was busier and friendlier. (see evidence in 3.11)
- The approach to **volunteering** has become more strategic with libraries consulting with volunteers, partners and staff on the roles volunteers can play and adoption of formal recruitment processes and policies. Three quarters of libraries have seen new services developed in response to volunteer suggestions. (2.27)
- The number of volunteers has increased, increasing the capacity of libraries and bringing in resources to deliver activities that would not otherwise be possible.
- Engaging **library staff** in the development of the plan and vision for the library will empower them in new ways to deliver community engagement. Libraries offered a range of workforce development activities including awareness raising of community engagement and working with volunteers. Libraries that have concentrated on developing their workforce to actively deliver community engagement have proven more successful at driving change.
- A significant number of libraries established formal **partnership** mechanisms to oversee the design of the building and service offer. Two-thirds of libraries had set up a Friends group.
- Partners have an increased understanding of the role of the library as a neutral space. This neutrality is valued for the ability it gives partners to deliver services in an environment with few judgements and preconceptions placed on users.
- Engagement is an iterative process, and many libraries have discovered this as the programme has matured.
- Where libraries had developed **community led management structures**, they were able to define a clearer vision for the library, more directed to the need of

that community, and it introduced communication channels that may not have otherwise been available to them.

- The programme was often described as the catalyst that has enabled libraries to improve their processes to engage with their community, and that it provided the means with which to take this approach to the next level.

There is a strong body of developing good practice, which is highlighted throughout the report of how libraries can work in a more involving way with their communities. **The best libraries have made effective use of additional revenue resources, recruited or created dedicated community engagement staff, and managers have taken a pro-active and enthusiastic approach to neighbourhood and partnership working.**

There are a number of areas identified for development, or where it was not possible to find strong evidence due a lack of data, for example:

- A lack of good local management information prevented us being able to quantify the extent to which the new users came from disadvantaged or under-represented groups
- Staff roles had changed as a direct result of the Community Engagement Plan but in most cases staff had little involvement in the development of it. Nearly all frontline staff said they knew what the CEP was, but many said they had little to do with delivering it.
- There is not a shared understanding of community engagement across the programme and within individual library authorities making planning to sustain and enhance community engagement a challenge.
- Little workforce needs assessment was undertaken on the skills, competencies, knowledge and behaviours staff at all levels would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working, meaning that organisational and workforce development to support community engagement in libraries may not be taking place in a planned and systematic way.
- There is also little evidence of frameworks in place for effective **external communication**. Few libraries had developed communication and marketing strategies, and, where they had, they were often basic or not utilised as well as they should be.
- Whilst partnership working increased, there is little evidence that libraries conducted assessments of partnerships at the beginning of the project or evaluated their partnership working systematically throughout. It could therefore be argued that both libraries and partners are not able to evidence the cost and value of working in partnership.

## Recommendations

### Library managers and staff:

- Adopt a self-assessment template or similar tool to encourage good practice
- Greater use of community profiles, and a clear vision for engagement
- Systematic training and staff development in community engagement skills, including more use of external expertise and resident/user feedback
- A greater focus on promotion and marketing library services in local areas

### Library service leads

- Lead partnership working on behalf of libraries, developing strong relationships and evaluating impact and benefit on a regular basis.
- Build community engagement into workforce development/human resource strategies to include community engagement functions and roles
- Explore new governance models that can be tailored to local circumstances
- Recognise achievements in community activity, for example volunteer awards.

### Local Authority services

- Create direct links between community engagement and customer service plans
- Provide data, policy support to library managers for planning purposes
- Encourage library participation in any locality-based governance and neighbourhood management structures,
- Use libraries to pro-actively support delivery of other targets

### MLA/DCMS/ACE

- Develop evidence base for community engagement in cultural services, including more clarity on expected outcomes and resource implications
- Create guidance on community engagement, working with other partners
- Increase profile of community engagement in performance and reward systems

### Big Lottery Fund

- Strengthen role of revenue funding and service change in capital programmes
- Make use of significant good practice in capital aspects of CLP
- Develop policy and evidence base for community involvement and engagement, drawing on experience of other sectors and settings.
- Consider more explicitly evaluation design and methodology issues as part of future programme development work, ensuring shared definitions and standards are in place

## 1 Introduction and background

1.1 This introductory chapter sets out the aims of the evaluation, relevant findings from previous research, and the current policy issues and tensions that can be informed by the study.

### **The Community Libraries programme**

1.2 The Communities Libraries programme (CLP) was launched by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) in 2006. The programme was designed with the aim of :

- invigorating libraries as centres of wider community learning and development and learning based activities
- creating, improving and developing library spaces that meet the needs of the whole community; and
- being innovative and promoting good practice in the ways libraries are designed to run

1.3 The application process was competitive, open to all local authority library services in England. 58 applicants were successful at the initial application stage in October 2007. The funding was mostly capital though some revenue was available to support service and community development activity. Total grants ranged from just over £500,000 to £2m, and the average (median) value of funding was £1,387,762. On average 8.5%, or £106,000, of this funding went on revenue support. In total, 77 individual library sites across England have been improved through the programme.

1.4 The programme's vision was to see libraries working with disadvantaged groups, existing users and non-users, voluntary and community groups and other community service providers. BIG and MLA also wanted libraries to reflect local and national strategies. The key elements of 'community engagement' were described as:

- Local residents are more actively involved in the development, delivery and management of library services
- There are increased numbers of community groups and activities in libraries, such as youth groups, older people's clubs and reading groups
- Disadvantaged and non-user groups use libraries more

- There are stronger relationships with community service providers, particularly learning providers<sup>2</sup>.

1.5 Successful bidders were required to submit a Community Engagement Plan (CEP) in addition to a business and capital plan and to monitor and report on community engagement activities throughout and at the end of their projects.

1.6 By January 2011, all but a few of the new libraries have been opened, with the majority opening around the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010.

1.7 In summary the CLP was a significant intervention in the library sector, both in terms of capital spending and in promoting a particular vision about the role and offer of libraries.

### **Aims of the evaluation and overview of methodology**

1.8 This evaluation is intended to update an earlier study that had identified a number of elements against which effective community engagement might be investigated. These included volunteering, partnership working, workforce development, skills and learning, health and well-being and sustaining and enhancing community engagement. These are broad headings which are required to capture the complexity and coverage of the term.

1.9 The stated objectives of this current evaluation were:

- to demonstrate outcomes and impact in line with the existing evaluation framework for community engagement in public libraries
- to provide an update on the evaluation findings from March 2010 and show where libraries have progressed, and where libraries struggled to develop their engagement activities further, and why.
- to demonstrate and communicate the learning in order to inform policy making by key national policy makers in MLA and BIG Lottery Fund, and wider stakeholders
- to inform and share practice among libraries.

1.10 The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- What are the evidenced outcomes of the community engagement activities of individual libraries in terms:

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<sup>2</sup> *BIG Lottery Fund (2006), Community Libraries Guidance Notes*

- volunteering
- partnership working
- workforce development
- learning and skills
- health and well-being
- sustaining and advancing community engagement
- What is the theory of change across the logic chain which explains how outcomes were delivered, or missed, in individual libraries?
- What are the key factors across the programme which contribute to the achievement of community engagement and empowerment outcomes?
- What work are individual libraries doing to sustain this work at a time of reducing resources across the public sector?
- How can the learning from the programme best support future policy direction, both in and beyond the library sector?

- 1.11 In short, the evaluation asks two major questions – firstly, how well have the Community Libraries understood and embraced the concept of community engagement and translated it into meaningful action. Secondly, does a ‘community engagement’ approach produce better services and outcomes for the local community?
- 1.12 Importantly, this evaluation was focused on the community engagement element of the programme rather than an assessment of the delivery and quality of the capital spending. The capital spending is relevant to this study only insofar as it provided additional spaces for community activity, and acted as a catalyst for wider change.
- 1.13 The research involved a combination of document review, self-assessments, and primary research. It was also based on the structure of the previous study, with a higher level of focus on five libraries and one non-BIG funded “control” library (the ‘intensive group’), and a more limited programme of research with a further 16 libraries (the ‘intermediate’ group). The ‘intensive’ group includes North Yorkshire, Lancaster, Sandwell and Nottingham as in the previous evaluations. Westminster has replaced Bristol in this evaluation as there had been unavoidable delays in the Bristol project with the library not open when this evaluation was conducted.
- 1.14 The control library for the study was Newcastle City Library. This library underwent a large scale redevelopment at the same time as the CLP was being

delivered, but the resource came from a PFI initiative. The size and scale of the work at Newcastle makes it an inappropriate control in some ways (it is much bigger than all of the libraries within the CLP), but it also demonstrates what can be achieved by libraries with a new building and a strong focus on service excellence, but without a community engagement plan.

1.15 The main elements of the study were<sup>3</sup>:

- A review of core programme information and community engagement plans for all 77 library sites
- A face-to-face self-assessment process with the six 'intensive' libraries
- Follow-up primary research in the same libraries
- A telephone-based self-assessment process for 16 libraries in the 'intermediate group'<sup>4</sup>

1.16 The primary research for the six 'intensive' libraries included interviews with library managers, front-line staff, partners, and volunteers. It also included a number of focus groups with community groups, and questionnaires with users.

1.17 A self assessment toolkit was produced to assist the libraries assess their community engagement work, and to identify areas for improvement and mainstreaming across the whole service.

### **Policy background**

1.18 There has been a long-running debate over the purpose and role of public libraries, particularly in response to a gradual downward trend in issues and visits and as libraries have moved away from being simply about lending books and providing a neutral and quiet space for reading and research. This debate is even more current in 2011 where library services are seeking to position themselves within the context of downward pressure on public funding, localism and the drive for joined up services.

1.19 This section of the report does not attempt to be a full description of the policy background, but identifies some of the key policy drivers and initiatives that have contributed to the community engagement approach to improving library services.

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix 6 contains more details about the methodology, and copies of all research instruments (self-assessment toolkits, topic guides, and questionnaires) are available on request.

<sup>4</sup> Fourteen intermediate libraries responded directly to this, and the evaluation used monitoring information where possible on the other two

- 1.20 In the early 2000s, a number of new library buildings such as the Idea Stores in Tower Hamlets, Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library and Peckham Library aimed to change the image of libraries as “staid and serious”. In many cases these designs were informed by retail experience; influencing signage, layout, extending opening hours, removing desks that had previously acted as barriers to users and self-service. They also included new spaces and facilities – classrooms, meeting rooms, coffee shops, spaces for exhibition and performance etc.
- 1.21 In 2002, the lottery funded the Peoples Network, providing computers for every library in the country. Many library services saw an increase in visits following the implementation of the Peoples Network. However, some commentators believe that the focus on ICT impacted negatively on the core purpose of the service as set out in the act to “have regard to keeping adequate stock of books, other printed matter, pictures, records, films and other materials in sufficient number, range and quality to meet the public’s requirements and the special needs of adults and children”.
- 1.22 In 2006, MLA published *Community Engagement in Public Libraries*<sup>5</sup> to report on current practice and future developments in community engagement. This document sets out a view of community engagement in public libraries.

*“Community engagement in public libraries means involving the community in decision making. It is about the community identifying needs and working in equal partnerships to address these. Libraries can take these opportunities to deliver on key targets and agendas; to widen participation contributing to community cohesion; or, to increase active citizenship and thereby to increase use of library services”*

- 1.23 The CLP was conceived in the context of examples of good practice in the sector itself, government’s new focus on community engagement and the recognised need for significant capital investment in library buildings across the country.
- 1.24 Following the CLP, community engagement has been included more recently in policy statements and programmes. In 2010 The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council published *Sharper Investment for Changing Times*. This sets out a prospectus for more creative planning to ensure that the value of the public investment in libraries, museums and archives is maximised. This included the promotion of new governance and delivery models, including non-Local Authority service delivery, and greater involvement of communities in designing services. It also called for improvements in performance and efficiency, a different approach to workforce development and for local authorities to better utilise their libraries for

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<sup>5</sup> *Community engagement in public libraries - A toolkit for public library staff*, MLA (2006)

wider purposes. The MLA also recognised the need to review services against community need, consider ways of co-locating and integrating services, and use volunteers to supplement core services.

1.25 In addition, the government funded Future Libraries Programme has been established to help the library service during the current challenging financial situation, with an ambition to ensure libraries play a central role for communities in the 'Big Society'. It is a partnership between national and local government, and driven by councils themselves. Funding has been made available for 10 projects across the country to find ways to:

- identify efficiency savings and customer improvements
- consider alternative governance models (charitable trust status, neighbourhood libraries)
- shared arrangements for IT and professional support between councils
- sharing library services across two authorities

#### **Research background**

1.26 In terms of the research background of the CLP, there are two relevant reports: a base line study<sup>6</sup>, and an interim evaluation<sup>7</sup>. Both studies developed the model of community engagement, though in different ways: The first emphasised the importance of vision and goals, community segmentation, organisation transformation, communications, social networks and metrics. It identified a number of challenges around these themes and suggested broad recommendations to address them. In particular, it identified a lack of understanding about what community engagement means in practice, and out-dated approaches to community segmentation and external communications.

1.27 The interim evaluation report highlighted evidence of the impact of Community Libraries on perceptions, workforce development, partnership working, learning and skills, well-being and volunteering. Based on the limited period of opening, there were a number of positive findings:

- Good progress was being made with higher user numbers and more diverse user profiles, some of which could be directly related to community engagement techniques.

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<sup>6</sup> *Community Libraries Programme Evaluation: An overview of the baseline for community engagement in libraries*, MLA (2008).

<sup>7</sup> *Community engagement in public libraries: an evaluation of the Big Lottery Fund's Community Library programme*, MLA (June 2010).

- Quality standards and local perceptions of libraries were improved
- There was particular success with engaging children and young people
- Leveraging additional investment has boosted the value of the Programme to just over £100m, and there are some examples where the programme has expanded to other libraries.

1.28 However, the study also found that staff had not always felt equipped to carry out community engagement techniques and the extent to which volunteering and deep involvement varied. Furthermore, whilst there were plenty of case study project examples of learning, skills and well-being activity, it was difficult to quantify and capture these impacts.

1.29 The MLA have also produced a number publications and research briefings setting out the contribution libraries make to family learning, older peoples learning, health and well-being, health literacy, their role in reducing digital exclusion, all of which have influenced service developments across the sector. Studies and research briefings have also been published on the extent, and value, of volunteering in libraries, museums and archives.

1.30 A recent study has highlighted high levels of public support for libraries, but also that awareness of their full offer is low, and customers put most emphasis on book stock and customer service (including more convenient opening hours).<sup>8</sup>

### **Structure of the report**

1.31 The report is organised in three main chapters. The next (second) chapter focuses on delivery, and, in particular, examines how well the community engagement approach has been implemented by participating libraries. The third chapter builds on this to examine the impacts of the community engagement approach. The fourth chapter covers the work being done by libraries to sustain the approach, and the factors and good practice associated with success. The final chapter sets out conclusions and recommendations.

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<sup>8</sup> *What do the public want from libraries?* MLA, (2010).

## 2 Delivering a community focus in libraries

2.1 This section of the report summarises the changes brought about by the CLP, and examines the overall standards of delivery in terms of community engagement approach. It describes delivery and experience of community engagement approaches.

### Key findings

- A key challenge faced by the programme is that there is no shared definition of community engagement across the community libraries. (2.21)
- The lead on volunteering has moved from project staff to frontline managers. In all intensive libraries volunteers a programme of induction is undertaken and each volunteer assigned to a member of staff (2.31)
- There is little evidence that libraries undertook a partnership analysis prior to establishing partnership mechanisms. Without this libraries cannot evidence the value and benefits of the partnership to delivering the community engagement outcomes (2.39)
- Library managers understanding of community engagement was more developed than that of frontline staff, but this had improved since staff had been working differently since the programme (2.44)
- 30% of the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' groups appointed community engagement roles to specifically increase the capacity of the project to deliver the CEP.
- Few libraries developed an assessment of workforce development need and so the appropriateness and value of staff training could not be measured (2.48)
- The link between formal and informal learning activities was not always mapped, reducing the opportunity for libraries to promote this offer to users and to identify partners to deliver a full programme (2.59)
- New partnerships relating to health and wellbeing had been developed across the programme too, but not all services mapped the links between the different elements of their offer, reducing their ability to measure their contribution to this outcome (2.65)

### An overview of changes brought about by the programme

2.2 The changes are described as changes to settings, services and people and processes.

### Settings

- 2.3 The majority of the buildings benefiting from the BIG funding were previously not designed in a way to support a quality customer experience as it is understood today. In many cases the old design and layout made it difficult for the libraries to present a targeted offer to meet the needs of their diverse user groups.
- 2.4 Significant changes to settings have been achieved with libraries refurbished to deliver modern buildings, with flexible spaces. Flexible design has included shelving on wheels so that the main public space can be re-configured to support events and activities that would not have been possible with fixed shelving. All projects have increased the energy efficiency of buildings.
- 2.5 In a number of projects there has been an increase in public space as a result of extension or re-configuration and reduction of back office and staff rooms. New frontages, layouts, signage have been introduced to make the buildings more accessible and welcoming. Improved layout and signage and zoned areas for different uses and user groups has been a key feature.
- 2.6 There is evidence that projects have aimed to change relationships with users through introducing self-service and reducing the amount of time staff spend behind an enquiry or loan/issue desk. A small number of libraries have dispensed with desks entirely and have installed “pods” that are clearly signposted for users and staff to use when dealing with enquiries.
- 2.7 There has been a significant increase in space for children and teenagers, including an increase in stock availability and dedicated ICT facilities. Zoned areas for teenagers have been integrated into three of the projects in the ‘intensive’ libraries.
- 2.8 The most prevalent changes to library settings has been seen in the design of spaces to support formal and informal learning and rooms to support a broad range of community activities. In designing community libraries authorities have created improved spaces for study, increased ICT for learning throughout the library and included dedicated learning centres/suites to support accredited learning.
- 2.9 Rooms for community activities range from small meeting rooms, rooms providing hot-desking opportunities for voluntary organisations, conference rooms, performance spaces and small rooms for confidential one to one meetings such as employment advice or health advice. The external aspect of the community libraries have been designed to make both the building itself and the activities taking place in the library more visible. A small number of projects have been able

to create garden spaces that can be used to promote healthy eating and host events.

In Northumberland the former Haltwhistle Mechanics Institute building has been refurbished to create a library building to extend facilities by providing improved community facilities, including provision of additional floor space for quiet study space, office accommodation, hot desk facilities, meeting and activity rooms and spaces.

### Services

- 2.10 Core library services have been improved across the programme in response to the findings of community engagement activities. Book stocks have been refreshed in all libraries, with some completely replacing the stock. Increased and improved information resources are a feature of many projects, with many libraries developing the information resources in the community libraries in response to consultation with partners and users.
- 2.11 The change in settings and increase in ICT facilities has enabled all libraries to provide improved spaces for study for all groups. In the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' libraries there are examples of new services for children and young people that did not exist previously. There has been an increase in stock for children and young people with examples of on-going engagement of teens in stock purchase. There is an increase in homework clubs, reading groups and evidence of new services developed in response to young people's feedback.
- 2.12 There has been a significant increase in delivery of adult and community learning across the programme – more information on the level of increased learning and types of offer is set out in section 3. The availability of spaces for statutory partners and community organisations to offer services and/or deliver activities has resulted in a wide range of services and activities available to library users that were not previously available. Some or all of the following are taking place in individual libraries:
- increasing access to advice services delivered by the council and other partners is a feature of all projects and include business advice, employment advice, housing advice and health advice.

In Buckinghamshire, Sure Start ran sessions at all three libraries including babysitting courses for teenagers. There are three gardening projects, in partnership with the Probation service at Micklefield, local schools, garden centres, horticultural group and volunteers from the wider community participate in the projects.

- promotion of services including health promotions, learning and skills fairs, job fairs

#### Meadows held a Health & Well-being fair in 2010.

80 people attended and various services came along to promote health: OSCAR, Arkwright Meadows Community Gardens, Chlamydia Screening programme, Portland Leisure Centre, Meadows Domestic Violence Forum, Change Makers, Back on Track, Cook & Eat Group, Community Nurse, Diabetic Association, NHS Health Trainers, NHS Nottingham City Health in Mind and Co-operative Community Action. During the event 34 blood pressure checks and 31 diabetes checks were taken.

- new conversation classes and reading groups have been established, targeted at different groups of users – teens, children, older people, BME communities, LGBT users.
- one-to-one confidential advice and information services are available such as drop in sessions for people with mental health issues, employment advice.
- services to increase employability have increased, ranging from classes to improve skills and life chances to job clubs and assistance with writing CVs and job search.
- activities to improve health outcomes, such as smoking cessation workshops, healthy eating workshops, yoga.
- cultural events – music, performances, visual arts, exhibitions
- workshops on local history and heritage
- opportunities to volunteer

#### People and process

- 2.13 Managers and front-line staff in the community libraries have been more actively involved in consultation with partners and community representatives. Across the programme, library staff have worked in a variety of ways to establish stakeholder relationships to enable community influence and ownership of the project and

library once open. Involvement at design and build stage of the programme is most evident with library services consulting more deeply and widely on the building and services than would have been the case without the driver to actively engage. Levels of involvement once the capital investment is complete and the building is open vary across the group.

- 2.14 The capital build for each of the community libraries provided a catalyst for staff to work in a different way and establish formal mechanisms for engaging partners and communities in decision making. For a number of libraries the formation of Partnership Boards and Friends Groups has, and continues to, provide a focus through which community stakeholders shape and influence services delivered within the library building.
- 2.15 For a number of libraries the engagement of local stakeholders has provided information and communication networks for staff that would not otherwise have been available. Staff have been able to plan services and activities that have made the libraries a hub of community activity. They have improved their knowledge and understanding of community need and aspiration leading to a significant increase in the number and range of activities in response.
- 2.16 Working through a community engagement approach, involving partners and local community representatives directly in planning has built the confidence of library staff to describe the benefits that the library offers to the community. Staff are more outward looking and confident when promoting the library to partners and community representatives. They are better able to describe the contribution the library can make in the local public service landscape.
- 2.17 Management and front-line staff have been involved in a greater degree of partnership working at both strategic and operational level. Staff interaction with partners varies across the libraries, depending on the relationship with partners. In some cases library staff are working closely on a day to day basis with partners who have co-located in the new library with the aim of increasing cross-over between information and services. In many cases library staff work with partners who delivery services in the library, in some instances in conjunction with library staff.
- 2.18 The change in settings and improved space and facilities within the library has been a key driver in the changing role of staff. In a number of libraries, staff and managers have been encouraged to 'test' new approaches to service delivery. This has resulted in a number of successes which are being trialled in other local libraries. The new community facilities mean that library staff have something to offer partners and community representatives

- 2.19 The commitment by libraries to engage and work with volunteers has greatly influenced the perception of volunteers by staff. The perception of some staff that volunteers will replace them as service deliverers has been altered in a number of cases. For many libraries, implementation of formal processes to define roles, recruit, supervise and develop volunteers, have been developed, and implemented through this programme.
- 2.20 For a number of libraries the benefit of local people volunteering within the library has facilitated access to traditionally hard to reach individuals and families and provided clear direction of appropriate service offers.
- 2.21 The role of staff as supervisors and mentors for volunteers has greatly increased across the programme.

### **Delivery approaches and standards**

- 2.22 A key challenge facing this evaluation was how to achieve an objective understanding of how well libraries had delivered community engagement. There is not a shared definition of community engagement across libraries participating in the programme. This is a characteristic that libraries share with the wider public sector where a number of definitions of community engagement are currently in use.
- 2.23 The previous evaluation identified six key themes to understand community engagement across the CLP. These are set out below:
- Volunteering
  - Partnership
  - Workforce development
  - Learning and skills
  - Health and well-being
  - Sustaining and enhancing community engagement
- 2.24 In order to provide the evaluation team and participating libraries with a consistent and evidenced based measure of community engagement activity a self-assessment toolkit was developed. The tool-kit sets out key features of excellence for each of the themes listed above, using descriptors for processes and activities. It was important to ensure that the language used to assess and describe community engagement in libraries was consistent with that used in other frameworks of quality standards for community engagement in use in the public sector. Therefore the descriptors were drawn from a range of other documents.

These included “*The Ideal Empowering Authority*”<sup>9</sup> and “*Scottish Standards for Community Engagement*”<sup>10</sup>.

2.25 The self-assessment provided a framework for libraries to explore in detail the processes that had contributed to translating community engagement activity into meaningful action, underlying factors that contributed to success and also barriers to developing their engagement activities. The five “intensive” libraries and the control completed their self-assessments working face to face with one of the evaluation team. Sixteen of the “intermediate” libraries completed the self-assessment with telephone support. A summary of the self-assessment outcomes against each of the first five themes is provided below. The self-assessment outcomes against the sustaining and enhancing community engagement will be addressed in section 4.

### Volunteering

2.26 Review of the monitoring reports and self-assessments undertaken for this evaluation demonstrates that volunteering has increased in quantity as a result of the requirement to develop and implement a community engagement plan. This requirement was translated into meaningful activity in a significant number of projects through establishing Project Boards, or some other mechanism, in which volunteers worked alongside library staff, statutory and voluntary service providers to oversee the development of the building design and service offer.

2.27 The previous evaluation published in June 2010 found that

- volunteering opportunities have varied between libraries
- the opportunity to develop volunteer opportunities had been negatively impacted in part because of some delays with the capital programme
- there were examples of volunteers taking on more diverse roles
- staff perceptions of volunteers needed to be carefully managed
- in many instances the profile of volunteers did not reflect the profile of the local community
- volunteer recruitment tended to be ad hoc rather than strategic

2.28 Since the previous evaluation, the majority of libraries in the ‘intensive’ and ‘intermediate’ group have established a formal policy and approach to volunteering and in a significant number of cases this is as a direct result of participation in the

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<sup>9</sup> *The Ideal Empowering Authority: An Illustrated Framework*. IDeA (March 2010)

<sup>10</sup> *National Standards for Community Engagement*, Communities Scotland. (July 2009)

CLP. These include clear procedures for recruitment, induction, training and support of volunteers. As a result there is a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of both volunteers and the library. Of the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' libraries (21 authorities):

- 80% have adopted a formal approach to volunteering
- 75% have a volunteer policy in place
- 55% developed volunteering opportunities in response to the CLP
- 55% delivered training to staff in working with volunteers
- 65% of libraries have established a Friends Group or equivalent
- 70% of libraries have developed new services in response to volunteer suggestions
- 70% involved volunteers in development of the project and service delivery

2.29 A more **strategic approach** has been taken to volunteering across the programme. A planned approach to identifying volunteer roles is evident across the libraries studied for the evaluation, rather than the ad hoc approach identified in the previous evaluation. Libraries are consulting with partners, users and staff on the roles that volunteers can play and designing them to support delivery of the library objectives.

2.30 There is **increased commitment** at all levels in the libraries to involving volunteers and recognition that volunteering is a two-way process benefiting volunteers and the organisation. The development of volunteer policies provided the opportunity to increase the knowledge, understanding and ownership of front-line managers and staff working with volunteers.

2.31 The responsibility for **developing volunteering** has varied across the programme. In a number of cases project staff employed as a result of the BIG funding led the development of the volunteer initiative, researching best practice, establishing the policy and procedures and seeking and recruiting volunteers. In a small number of projects the role was outsourced. North Yorkshire commissioned the local CVS to develop and implement the programme in the first instance using library funding.

In Lancashire, the Director of Adult and Community Services identified funding for two Volunteer Services Co-ordinators to increase the capacity of the community library project to develop volunteering. Eighty Five volunteers were recruited to work in the three community libraries, Haslingden, Colne and Lancaster within six months.

- 2.32 Whilst the **lead on volunteering** was initially provided by project staff there is evidence of the responsibility for recruiting volunteers increasingly moving to front-line managers. In all the 'intensive' libraries a programme of induction is undertaken for volunteers and each volunteer has a named member of staff to manage and support them. This provided volunteers with one-to-one support and ensured staff had a greater understanding of the needs and skills of each volunteer.
- 2.33 A significant number of projects established **opportunities for volunteers** as active and engaged consultees, particularly during the development of the building design and service offer.

Nottingham, established a Community Sounding Board (CSB) in December 2008 with 30 members (10 regularly) attending monthly meetings in the evenings. The Project Manager, funded by BIG has been the key link with this group and invested significant time in building a trusting and effective working relationship with them.

- 2.34 **Volunteer roles** across the programme are extremely varied. In some projects volunteers are providing capacity to support library staff to carry out what might be regarded as core services. These include providing assistance with homework clubs and reading groups, supporting access to ICT facilities and in stock purchasing. In Harrogate Library (North Yorkshire), volunteers supported IT drop-in sessions held in the library to ensure staff are available to assist customers but also to ensure the learner has as much support as possible. In the Meadows library, volunteers tend to be involved in decision-making panels such as the Friends Group and Management Board, which mean that staff have very little interaction with volunteers.

### Partnership

- 2.35 Libraries have a track record of working in partnership, specifically around individual projects and initiatives. The majority of CEP plans included specific targets to increase and deepen partnership working; as a result the number and range of organisations working with the community libraries has seen a step change. Partnership activity ranges from the formal, with clear terms of reference and roles and responsibilities, to very informal partnerships where there is no explicit definition of how to work together and maximise the contribution of the activity to the community library objectives.
- 2.36 The previous evaluation of June 2010 found that:
- some existing partnerships were strengthened

- internal and external partners had increased understanding of value of libraries in facilitating access to local communities
- new external partnerships formed

2.37 This broad trend that the previous study identified has continued, and partnerships across the programme can be broadly grouped in to four categories: strategic; management; operational; working alongside.

2.38 In the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' group (21):

- 15% have established new governance models for delivery - 2 x Trusts and 1 Management Board
- 85% actively increased partnership working
- 85% have established new service partners
- 55% improved partnerships with schools
- 40% improved partnerships with youth services

2.39 **Strategic partnerships** were most prevalent in the development phase of the programme where formal partnerships were established in a number of authorities. All of the 'intensive' libraries established formal mechanisms for engaging partners in the development and delivery of the project. These groups had clear terms of reference, with managers and partners clear about the status of the partnership and the decision making responsibilities allocated to them. These partnerships aimed to develop a shared vision and objectives for their community libraries.

2.40 The make-up of these partnerships varied according to the project and context, ranging from community representation, other council departments, PCT, neighbourhood managers, schools, voluntary and community providers. There is little evidence that libraries undertook a partnership analysis prior to establishing partnership mechanisms. It could be argued that without such an analysis libraries are unable to evidence the value and benefits of the partnership to delivering the community engagement outcomes.

Westminster established a Community Steering Group including two local residents, a Church Street Neighbourhood Management Board Member (resident), Church Street Neighbourhood Manager and City West Homes Officer working alongside library officers. In addition, the Project Officer was based in the Church Street Neighbourhood Office increasing the potential for partnership working.

- 2.41 Now that the new libraries are open not many of these partnerships are being taken forward as **management partnerships** across the whole programme. In the ‘intensive’ group three authorities (Nottingham, North Yorkshire and Sandwell) are planning to maintain the original partnership and re-direct it to a more operational focus now that the library is open. Whilst it is early days one of the ‘intensives’ has taken the decision to formally constitute a new partnership group as the Meadows Library Management Board. Volunteer representatives and partners will work alongside library managers and be involved in local decisions, including opening hours, allocation of surplus room booking income, new projects etc.
- 2.42 A number of new **operational partnerships** have been established and others strengthened with explicit agreements on roles and responsibilities, including joint planning, sharing data and joint review.

The Meadows in Nottingham, has established a partnership with the local school to work together to improve reading through sharing data, joint planning and evaluation.

- 2.43 There is a significant level of activity, that library management and front-line staff define as partnership working, which can be categorised “**working alongside**”. In these examples the partnership does not go any further than organisations using the library facilities to deliver services. At times this can be seen as a missed opportunity, but there are ways in which working together can be made more beneficial to the library (see Sandwell ‘buddy’ system below).

Sandwell developed the role of a “buddy”, where front-line staff are the operational link with the partner using community spaces to deliver their activities. A ‘buddy’ role profile has been established and a clear protocol for how the staff member works with the partner is in place. This approach aims to deepen understanding between library staff and partners about each others’ services and aspirations, thereby increasing the potential for synergies to be maximised.

In addition, Sandwell agree a service level agreement with all organisations using the community rooms regularly over a period of time to sign up to participate in twice yearly review meetings and share data with the library staff. The practice of reviewing activity and sharing data in a systematic way is not embedded in many of the community libraries.

- 2.44 The community libraries have interpreted partnership broadly, judging community organisations and other agencies using the new facilities in the libraries all as partners.

### Workforce development

- 2.45 The understanding of community engagement, what it is and what skills, behaviours and knowledge are required to deliver effective community engagement is mixed. Libraries participating in the self-assessment agreed that manager's understanding of community engagement was more developed than that of front-line staff. Having said that, there is evidence that understanding of community engagement and its benefits had improved as a result of staff actually experiencing working in this way now that the libraries are open.
- 2.46 The requirement to submit and report on the CEP was a key developmental driver. Some guidance was provided to libraries to assist them in building these plans, including a description of levels of participation and examples of engagement activity. Libraries were required to demonstrate how their community engagement activities in the plans contributed to progression on the levels of participation and report on progress throughout the project. They also had to set out what workforce development activities would be delivered to support staff to deliver the community engagement levels.
- 2.47 The previous evaluation found that:
- Some staff reported lack of confidence in community engagement activities, however other staff have embraced new way of working
  - Dedicating resources to community development staff has made an impact on the success of community engagement
- 2.48 This mixed perspective from staff remains, as does the value of external community development staff. Of the group of 'intensive' and 'intermediate' libraries (21):
- 15% undertook workforce needs assessment
  - 30% changed staff role profiles to reflect community engagement
  - 85% judged that staff understood needs and aspirations of community better
  - 25% delivered training in working with people with disabilities
  - 20% delivered training in working with special schools
  - 45% delivered training in working with schools
- 2.49 The workforce development activities for permanent staff ranged from formal training, coaching and learning on the job. All libraries in the 'intensive' group addressed new ways of working through established performance appraisal mechanisms. However, there is little evidence that libraries conducted an

assessment of workforce development needs of permanent library staff around community engagement. It could therefore be argued that without a robust assessment of needs around community engagement skills, knowledge and competencies the appropriateness and value of the training could not be measured. However, there are examples of good practice including in Bolton where a toolkit for developing community engagement was funded by the Laser Foundation.

At the Brightmeet Library (Bolton) the BIG Project Co-ordinator organised a number of activities to develop staff's understanding and skills to engage and consult with the local community. At Brightmeet they used the toolkit developed to support engagement and consultation for High Street Library – an exemplar of a library previously developed in conjunction with the community. The development and implementation of the original toolkit was funded by the Laser Foundation.

- 2.50 The most common form of training across the programme was training to work with volunteers and raising awareness of community engagement. This was delivered variously by external volunteer agencies and by project staff with skills in working with volunteers and through a community development approach. Some specific training was provided in working with specific groups.
- 2.51 The two most common workforce development activities were the opportunity to discuss/contribute to the review of the CEP for front-line managers and staff, and “learning on the job”. This was delivered from either from staff appointed to deliver community engagement informally or in house training.
- 2.52 Community profiles were established and communicated to staff in a number of libraries and the results of consultation activities were fed back to front-line staff on a regular basis. In some libraries, managers and front-line staff attended Partnership Boards and consultation to assist them to develop a better understanding of the needs and aspirations of their communities in a systematic way.
- 2.53 A significant number of projects appointed new staff to manage and oversee the delivery of the CEP. Six libraries (or about 30%) in the ‘intensive’ and ‘intermediate’ group appointed community engagement managers and/or community engagement officers to specifically increase the capacity of the project to deliver the plan. Many of these new appointees benefited from workforce development activities, representing their project at workshops and training opportunities offered by BIG and MLA and other providers.

### Learning and Skills

- 2.54 The majority (80%) of libraries adopted outcomes relating to learning and skills. Desired outcomes included adult learners achieving Level 2 qualifications; improvements in basic skills, ICT and literacy; knowledge of heritage; ESOL, increased confidence in using ICT and improved literacy, attainment and confidence in children and young people.
- 2.55 The 2010 evaluation found that
- case studies included examples of libraries being invigorated as centres of wider community based learning and skills
  - evidence of improved levels of educational attainment amongst children and young people and enhanced employability amongst adults
  - significant increase in take up of the library offer by children and young people who had not previously participated
  - Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs)<sup>11</sup>, especially relating to Skills and Behaviour & Progression were a significant feature of the case studies
- 2.56 Across the group of 'intensive and 'intermediate libraries (21):
- 75% increased learning opportunities for adults
  - 65% increased learning opportunities for children
  - 50% increased learning opportunities for youth
  - 65% increased learning opportunities for over 50s
  - 45% increased opportunities to signpost to employment and learning support
  - 10% employed community learning champions
- 2.57 There are examples of good practice where the learning and skills programme of activity has been developed in line with evidence of need. Westminster worked with local learning providers to identify gaps in provision and Nottingham undertook research with families on learning for under 5s. Many libraries had identified the need to address issues of educational under-achievement in children and young people and to deliver activities to improve skill levels and employability for adults.
- 2.58 The increased focus on engaging with communities and partners as a result of the CEP resulted in some libraries undertaking original research about learning need

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<sup>11</sup> [www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk](http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk)

in the community. Where projects had adopted outcomes relating to learning and skills the design and implementation of the programme was informed by partners and community representatives through project boards, focus groups and other mechanisms.

The Meadows in Nottingham conducted research with parents of under 5s and worked closely with local primary schools to design the service for this group.

- 2.59 The learning offer across the programme included a wide range of delivery mechanisms. These include adult learning providers delivering accredited learning, workshops in financial literacy, advice for businesses, access to on-line learning resources, homework clubs and study support. In some libraries learning centres have been established allowing for communities to access a range of formal learning close to where they live and in a neutral environment. ICT facilities are significantly improved across the programme increasing the capacity of libraries to promoting digital inclusion. Library staff and volunteers have been trained to offer support to users to access on-line resources, with specific groups targeted for support such as older users.

At the Toxteth Community Library (Liverpool) the vision for learning and skills has been emphasised by the level of both resource and research that has been carried out as part of their community library project.

The project has developed an innovative community led learning and information hub in response to the social and economic challenges faced by the Toxteth community. The need to improve learning and skills, including life skills, for the local community has been, and continues to be, mapped by the library. In addition to the BIG funding used to support the mapping and delivery of reading and literacy services, additional funding has been used to employ a second outreach reading worker.

There are currently 10 reading groups in Toxteth, including groups for people with mental health difficulties, asylum seekers and refugees. In addition the learning programme is supported by 10 local Community Learning Volunteers who are also involved in both the planning and delivery of the service.

- 2.60 The learning and skills programmes are not always clearly and comprehensively defined. The link between formal learning activities and the opportunity that libraries offer for self-directed and informal learning was not always mapped. This could reduce the opportunity for libraries to promote this offer to users and to

identify appropriate partners to deliver a full programme. Joint planning and delivery with partners was undertaken in those projects that established partnership boards, but there is also evidence of libraries working with individual learning partners to plan delivery.

- 2.61 Libraries were unable to quantify the level of resources allocated to learning and skills from their budgets. In many cases the delivery of learning and skills activities – especially formal, accredited programmes - were delivered by partners bringing their resources to the library. This will be picked up in the next chapter in terms of impacts, and it highlights that whilst libraries are interested in learning and skills outcomes, they are often supported indirectly.

### Health and Well-being

- 2.62 30% of library projects adopted outcomes relating to health and well-being within their CEP. Five projects adopted outcomes relating to reducing social isolation of older people as a contribution to improving health and well-being.
- 2.63 The previous evaluation found:
- social benefits for individuals with mental health issues participating in activities
  - evidence of Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs), especially relating to Health and Wellbeing, Strengthening Public Life and Stronger and Safer Communities in the case studies
- 2.64 Whilst the focus on health and well-being in project outcomes was not as great as the focus on learning and skills there is a significant amount of activity relating to health and well-being in the ‘intensive’ and ‘intermediate’ libraries, and the findings of this evaluation support the greater emphasis on mental health that the previous study stressed.
- 2.65 Across the ‘intensive and ‘intermediate’ libraries (21):
- 45% increased opportunities to gain health information
  - 60% increased opportunities to participate in health activities
  - 50% actively plan with health partners
- 2.66 The health and well-being offer across the programme is varied including self-help book collections, bibliotherapy projects (Books on Prescription, Make Friends with a Book), health information displays, health information on-line, activities including yoga, health clinics and drop in-sessions and health fairs. Whilst new partnerships have been developed across the programme with activities taking place to promote health information and healthy lifestyles the link with the libraries core

offer on health and well-being of books, information and bibliotherapy activities was mixed across the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' groups. Not all services have mapped the links between the different elements of their health and well-being offer (core services and activities). This could reduce the libraries ability to measure and demonstrate the contribution to health and well-being.

- 2.67 All libraries in the 'intensive' group used local health data and worked with the PCT to deliver services contributing to health and well-being, although health partners were not always present on the partnerships set up to develop the building design and service offer. There are some examples of co-location of the library with health partners, offering the opportunity for partnership working to increase over time.

In North Somerset the community library project has been developed by, and will be managed by, the council in partnership with the For All Healthy Living Company – a vibrant, well- established voluntary and community sector organisation that is rooted in the local community and has a sound track record of successful community engagement. The not for profit company limited by guarantee has strong, sustainable foundations from which to develop services, facilities and activities in response to local need. Run as a social enterprise as part of the Healthy Living Centre Friends of the Library Group, the role of the group will be shaped by the members. Members have been recruited from the steering group plus new members.

- 2.68 The CLP has stimulated new partnerships with health where they did not previously exist and has increased work with existing ones, in part because of the availability of new spaces. This provides a good foundation for those libraries to now map linkages where it had not been undertaken to support improved planning and to assist the library to secure the resources necessary to build on the offer.

### Summary

- 2.69 In terms of activity, therefore, it is clear that libraries have continued to deliver a great and growing range of services through their community engagement work, and that just as important as the services are the setting and the people and processes that have taken place in this programme. This consideration is important to appreciate in the next chapter, where the impacts of the activity of the libraries will be described.

### 3 Impact and outcomes of the programme

- 3.1 The main driver for this evaluation update was to understand the impact of the investment in, and approach to, community engagement of the programme. The section addresses this in terms of updating the work of the previous study.

#### Key findings

- The key success of the programme has been to increase, as a result of the programme, **community involvement in libraries** (3.36)
- Involvement in libraries manifests itself in different ways, but the most frequent is individuals volunteering in the **delivery of added value services in the libraries** (3.47)

At its best, the programme has improved the quality of libraries as platforms of use by the community – involving, engaging and adding value (3.69)

- Usage has increased as a result of the programme (3.6)
- The availability of multiple community rooms is a key success factor (3.9)
- Staff have experienced change mostly in terms of them having a different role and function within the library and local area (3.16)
- Partner organisations gain multiple benefits as a result of the programme, and this is driven by having a greater reach as a result of the CLP (3.22)
- Working with different and new user groups increases usage and creates a positive feedback loop through working with new networks (3.32)
- There is no evidence that this approach reduces costs, but a large amount of evidence that it increases the value of services offered by libraries through co-production (3.50)
- Volunteering in libraries has become more systematic and structured as a result of the programme (3.55)
- The direct impacts of the programme have led to opportunities to deliver and support outcomes for individuals and the community in terms of health and wellbeing and learning and skills that are different/ additional to what would have been possible without the CLP (3.57 and 3.63)

#### Overview of impacts and outcomes

- 3.2 The previous study took place at a time when many libraries had not opened, and when those that had were still getting to grips with new buildings and new

approaches. To a degree, this remains the case. Several libraries still felt that they were only just beginning this process and that true impacts would manifest over a number of years. Despite this, there is much more evidence now available to understand the types and quantity of impacts that are occurring as a result of the investment.

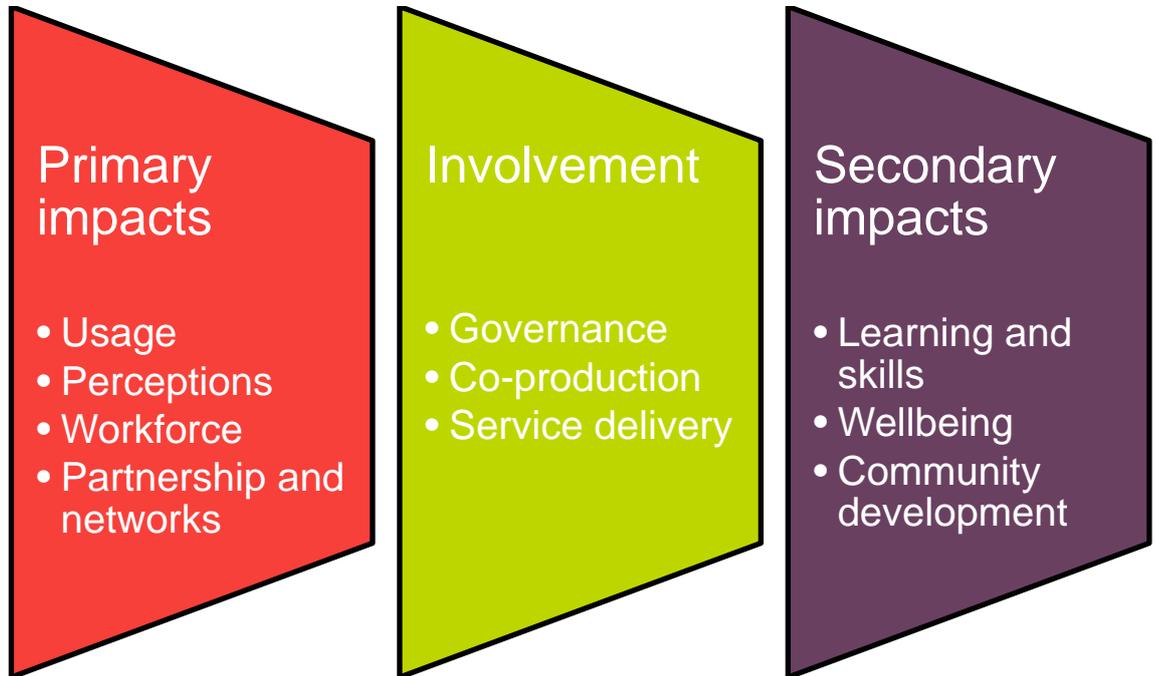
3.3 The June 2010 report described a number of impacts of community engagement. They were:

- Library perceptions
- Volunteering
- Partnership
- Workforce development
- Learning and skills
- Health and well-being

3.4 This study builds on the impacts and logic chain identified in the previous report, by categorising them into primary and secondary types (see Figure 3.1 below). The subsequent sections highlight the direct impacts (Primary Impacts) of the community engagement work implemented by Libraries, followed by how this has increased involvement in the work of the library in a range of ways. This involvement has subsequently created impacts that are different or greater to those that libraries can support typically (Secondary Impacts).

3.5 It is important to note that other libraries generate secondary impacts through their work, with a range of initiatives and projects to improve learning, health and wellbeing. For example, the control library in this study highlights how Newcastle has delivered many of these outcomes without the same approach. The aim of this study, therefore, is to attempt highlight what has happened that is different, distinctive and additional because of the **community engagement** process. The conceptual difference is that by focussing on the process of involvement, CLP libraries have delivered secondary impacts, whereas the control library placed its emphasis on customer service excellence. Whilst this is not to say that CLP libraries were not looking at customer service principles (many had very high standards), this chapter will highlight how these differences have manifested in the libraries.

Figure 3.1 - the impacts of the Community Libraries Programme



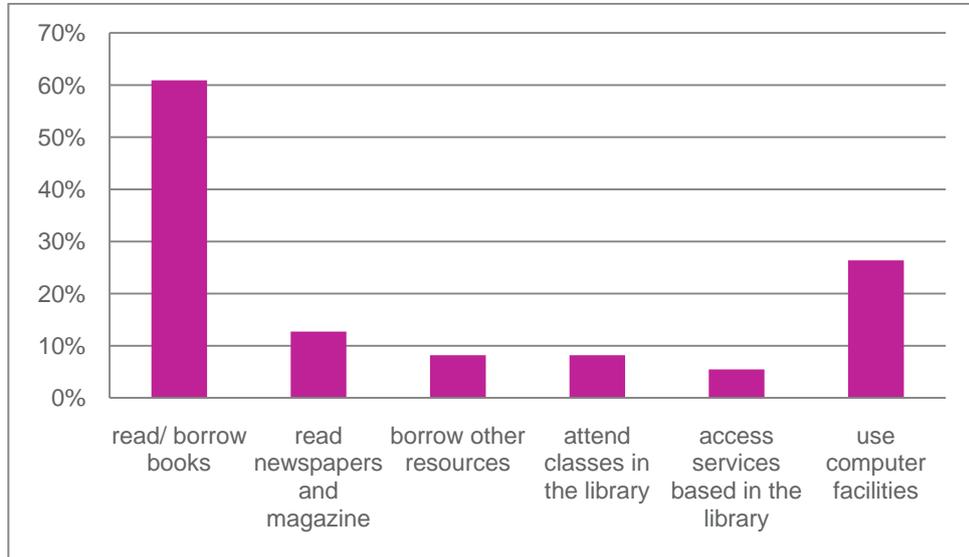
**Primary impacts: usage, perceptions, workforce and partners**

**Usage**

- 3.6 It is clear that the usage of libraries has increased following the investment in them from the CLP, and this can be seen in evidence from all libraries that were part of the 'Intensive' and 'Intermediate' research groups. A quarter (26%) of library users in the sample from the intensive group stated that they used the library more since the changes. Management information from the libraries shows an increase in user numbers in all cases, but a wide range in the size of the increase (see Figure 3.3 below).
- 3.7 When compared to general library usage across the country, the picture is similar but slightly nuanced.<sup>12</sup> The two surveys are not easily or directly comparable, but it there is evidence that there is slightly lower book usage in CLP libraries, but greater use of IT facilities and other general activities and events. This would support the views and perceptions of staff, partners and volunteers.

<sup>12</sup> *What do the Public Want from Libraries?* MLA (November 2010), p17.

*Figure 3.2 – user survey – Why are you in the library today? (Multiple options possible)  
Survey of 110 users across five library authorities – see Appendix 4 for more details*



3.8 There were other examples of changing usage within libraries, including 12% who now attend more events at the library, and 10% that attend more groups or different activities that are run within the library. The majority of users were in the library for traditional reasons (books and IT) but there are clear signs of a different pattern of usage, related to the CLP itself (see Figure 3.2).

3.9 Stakeholders across the libraries assert that a large degree of the increased usage comes from the groups and individuals brought in through having new facilities and community rooms. This has been facilitated by the CEP process of outcome targets and milestones that often include setting up and supporting a number of groups. The availability of community rooms is crucial, and those libraries that only have one community room are already seeing the value: ‘The meeting room does a lot, but having only one is really limiting – I really wish we had another’.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Staff interview 2009

**Impact of community rooms – Bleakhouse Library (Sandwell)**

Bleakhouse library in Sandwell has three community rooms since the refurbishment and these are used every day by a range of groups. Groups who use the rooms include local nurseries and schools, an art group run by local volunteers, Make Friends with a Book, Sandwell MIND, UK Online and many others.

These are getting more people into the library and there is an agreement from all parties that this is making the library a busier and more bustling place.

The groups are empowered to run their own activities, but do so in partnership with the libraries and library staff. The result, as described by staff, volunteers and users is a library that feels more owned by and relevant to the local community.

**Control**

In Newcastle, rooms and spaces have been provided in the library, and these are clearly marketed as professional spaces for hire as opposed to building a market for them through community engagement.

- 3.10 Library staff, partners and volunteers all described new user groups using the library as a result of the work. In most libraries there was insufficient data to quantify changes to user demographics, and to determine to what extent disadvantaged or under-represented user groups were using the library more. However, it is plausible to suggest this is the case because many of the activities are typically designed explicitly for these groups.
- 3.11 The general increase in user numbers has not universally translated into increased book issues, and the three libraries highlighted in the box below illustrate both the increase in usage, and an increase that is not mirrored by an increase in book loans.

*Figure 3.3. Increasing usage of libraries – examples of change*

<b>Bolton</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Visits</b>	<b>New Members</b>
Jan – Dec 2008	39,025	32,395	301
Jan – Dec 2010	43,727	44,284	861
	<b>12%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>186%</b>

North Tyneside	Issues	Visits	New Members
Jan – Dec 2008	24,376	25,015	273
Jan – Dec 2010	47,597	70,580	1,547
	95%	182%	466%

Wolverhampton	Issues	Visits	
June – Dec 2009	44,262	48,453	
June – Dec 2010	64,358	74,524	
	45%	53%	

### Perceptions of Libraries

- 3.12 Perceptions of the libraries have shown clear changes. In a sample of users across the five intensive libraries, approximately 1 in 4 users felt that the libraries were busier (25%), friendlier (27%) and were now running different services (23%). Given that this survey was run during the working day and therefore captures only a sample of users and was designed to capture the views of general library users, it is clear that this change in perception is quite substantial (see Appendix 4 for full details of the survey).

### Workforce Development / Staff Roles

- 3.13 It is important to acknowledge that many members of staff who participated in this evaluation, whether frontline or management, reported that the changes to the role of staff in libraries was not particularly new to them. There has been a broad trajectory of change in recent years, and the impacts of this programme are difficult to separate entirely from other changes to the library service. That being said, staff themselves saw differences as a result of the programme, and saw that the programme had involved elements of development to their roles.
- 3.14 The impact of this has been that staff in these libraries have begun to consider their role differently as a result of the investment and the community engagement approach. This change is varied across the programme, and all libraries have experienced challenges in changing the roles for staff. Interviews with frontline staff at different libraries highlight that staff agree with and endorse the two programme impacts of:
- Changing the role of the library to being **more of a community hub and social space**, which attracts more and different users and runs more and different activities

- These changes providing **more opportunities for users to gain personal skills and experience**

- 3.15 In terms of the impact on the individuals and their roles, however, they saw the programme instilling a culture change, where users and the community expect different things from libraries and library staff. 2.52 above highlights that workforce development has typically been through staff involvement with the delivery of the CEP, working with external community development professionals, and mainly through ‘on the job’ experience. This experience based learning has resulted in an iterative learning process with their respective communities.
- 3.16 This highlights that although the libraries have experienced change differently, the key thing for staff has been very much the changing role within the local area and the impact that this has had on their role and how they are perceived by partner organisations, users and the community more broadly. Staff describe the changes to their role more in terms of how they work with individuals who come into the library and community groups who work with the library than about things like specific skills.<sup>14</sup>
- 3.17 In many instances, staff saw these changing roles very positively. There was a view that perceptions were changing amongst users. They saw the library as more friendly, open, changing to meet demand and more attractive to their community.<sup>15</sup> It was also clear that this was having an impact on how staff viewed themselves, and wanted to meet that changing demand: ‘It’s all a higher standard – we have to deliver a first class service. We feel a responsibility to that’.<sup>16</sup> This change was hard for many staff to deal with though, and it is apparent that some felt like they needed more support and time to make such large changes. This was recognised by management staff across the programme as well: ‘Everybody has to raise their game – to live up to it’.<sup>17</sup>
- 3.18 There is a strong endorsement for the much more community focussed approach from many staff – but there were also some who felt that something was lost from the traditional library service. Of all the stakeholders who took part in this research, it was the staff who raised the most fears. ‘It’s not just a library anymore’.<sup>18</sup>
- 3.19 There have also been, in a number of instances, staff brought in to libraries as a result of the programme who have different backgrounds, skill sets and

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 4 for more on changes to staff roles

<sup>15</sup> Staff interviews 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2013

<sup>16</sup> Staff interview 2005

<sup>17</sup> Management interview 1005

<sup>18</sup> Staff interview 2003

perspectives. Typically these include project management, community engagement and volunteering skills, but there are also examples of more specific learning and skills staff that are brought in, i.e. homework club staff. This issue will be picked up in the subsequent chapter on sustaining community engagement, but it is clear that the involvement of new skill sets in libraries has impacted on front-line managers and staff as they have learnt from new colleagues.

- 3.20 The impact of this has often been new ideas, perspectives and challenges. The key tension is how these are integrated and maintained within the service, and the picture is less clear in some places than others, and this is covered in the next chapter.
- 3.21 In summary, therefore, the key impact on staff has been to lead them to thinking differently about the tensions that are currently inherent within the library service. This has enabled them to more explicitly link community engagement with other changes that are going on in libraries, such as self service and floor-walking, and to be more proactive in reaching their community, rather than mainly reacting to individual user requests.

#### Partnership and Networks

- 3.22 A further significant impact of the programme has been the changing usage by, and relationships with, **partner agencies and organisations**. In terms of usage alone, partners use the buildings much more. According to a range of in-depth interviews with partners from across the programme, there are two key drivers for this increase in usage:
- **New and more appropriate facilities** that allow for more appropriate and effective co-location, and that are more flexible to different community uses
  - **Community engagement approach** that places the library more coherently within the local service landscape and builds on the core strength of libraries to partners – their neutrality
- 3.23 There is also evidence that cuts to public budgets mean that partners are relying on local libraries as venues for service provision to a greater degree. This was evidenced through the experience of library managers, as it was too early to see this in the usage of the rooms and facilities. This could well be an issue that grows for libraries in communities as cuts to other services increase. Libraries typically had variable charges for their rooms, depending on whether they were for community or commercial use, but did generate some income from them.
- 3.24 The capital investment has facilitated greater use by partners. Sometimes this seems to be connected purely to space, and the ambition was there before: ‘Not

much was happening before the refurbishment as there wasn't enough space'.<sup>19</sup> In other instances, it is clear that partners have come to the library that hadn't before, because that space was available. Library staff, in discussing their own objectives, highlight that the space pushes them to find and work with new partners: 'The spaces create the ideas'<sup>20</sup>

- 3.25 It is clear from a range of perspectives that this increase in usage by partners is viewed very positively. In terms of the vitality it has given the buildings through increased usage, staff state that: 'Partners using [the building] more has been the best thing for this library'.<sup>21</sup> The partner organisations also feel that libraries are positive for their work and the changes to libraries generally improve the partnership and relationships.
- 3.26 As highlighted in chapter 2, above, there is evidence that partnerships have not been maximised. Whilst the informal nature of this partnership working is of benefit to both the library and community organisation or statutory partner it is possible that increased understanding of the synergy between the partners is not being maximised. With the use of explicit definitions of roles and responsibilities lacking across the programme it is possible that staff are not empowered to take decisions. In addition there is not much evidence that processes for reviewing partnership working are embedded which could impact negatively on the library and partners securing an improved understanding and/or capture the value of working together for their beneficiaries. Despite all the successes described here, therefore, there is a possibility that opportunities for further success have been missed in some instances.
- 3.27 In terms of partners themselves, the key method of defining the impact of the programme has been one of 'reach', defined as increasing take-up and participation of their services (see Figure 3.2). The broad range of partner organisations interviewed provided evidence for a number of ways in which the programme of investment created mechanisms for increasing reach. These increasing examples of greater reach emphasise the interplay between the refurbishment and the community engagement plans in supporting the needs of partner organisations.

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<sup>19</sup> *Partner interview 3011*

<sup>20</sup> *Staff interview 2005*

<sup>21</sup> *Staff interview 2002*

Figure 3.2 – The added value of Community Libraries for partners – reaching more people

Traditional libraries	Reach from development	Reach from engagement
Library building	New building	New spaces
Existing users	More users	New users

- 3.28 The library has always been a good place for partnership working because of the facilitation and signposting role of the service, the neutrality of the service, and the customer service skills of its staff. The new building has attracted in more users (as is also very much the case in the control library), but the CEP and the new spaces have encouraged specific and proactive attempts to work with and bring in new users and user groups.
- 3.29 The new buildings, with improved design, are an attractive space which makes them better places to run projects and activities. It was felt that this is good for attendance and for the outcomes of individuals. This also, in a number of libraries, allowed for much clearer co-location of services.

#### Smethwick Library (Sandwell) – LGBT community and reading groups

Prior to the refurbishment of Smethwick library, there was no LGBT group in the area and local organisations (such as the PCT) struggled to engage with local LGBT residents. With a more defined private space in the library, and a more proactive attitude to bringing groups into the library, the PCT and an active member of the community were able to work with the library in establishing a community group. The group now meets fortnightly, and this has grown to include a reading group that meets on the weeks in-between, with an average of 10 attendees per session.

The neutral, safe and private space is really important for many members of the group, but the partnership with the library also allows them to get to know other groups, work with the local police and provide the basis for stronger social networks in the LGBT community. The activities of the group have also encouraged the library to have a permanent LGBT display in the library, and label all LGBT books throughout the book stock with a rainbow sticker on the spine.

The space allowed the basis to support the objectives of underrepresented local residents, the library itself and local partners. In the words of the organiser of the group: ‘We can’t have our community group without this library’.

- 3.30 The new rooms within the buildings are designed with the community in mind and provide spaces for specific activities: ‘the rooms have been really beneficial – a private space that allows us to involve more families in learning’.<sup>22</sup>
- 3.31 The existing users interact with the new spaces and new approach within the buildings. This creates opportunities for cross referral between people who already use the library, and activities that had not previously been available within the library itself.
- 3.32 As referenced above, the changes to the libraries has created an increase in usage. As more users are coming in, they are increasing the usage of services run by partner organisations
- 3.33 There is evidence that the libraries are, as a result of their community engagement plans, reaching and working with groups of users who had not previously used the library. These different users bring with them new networks and connections, which allow for more access routes for the library and partners.

#### Lancaster Library (Lancashire) – teen users

Prior to the refurbishment that took place through the Community Libraries programme, Lancaster libraries was working with young people through the ‘Get it Loud’ initiative of music events in libraries. Whilst pioneering in its work, the library was focussing on working with the young people and event managing the concerts. There was less time and space to do more.

The refurbishment to the library allowed the opportunity for a massive consultation exercise, including work with the young people who tended to congregate in the market square outside the library. Innovative approaches, techniques and persistence resulted in a much greater understanding of the views and needs of the young people.

The result was not only an adaptation of the offer to young people, but a closer working relationship with services such as the police, the YMCA and other council departments. The library has seen an increase in membership of around 24%, and there is anecdotal information that this is higher for young people who use the IT facilities, and attend the groups that are run by partners in library. People who hadn’t used the libraries are more clearly being brought in, and are working with a range of partners in the library.

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<sup>22</sup> Partner interview 3007

3.34 This increased reach has a very real impact on users in terms of volume alone, and this was commented on by the partner organisations: ‘since the refurbishment and since the new classrooms in the library, we’ve been able to run group sessions with local FE colleges which has directly increased the number of people we can provide support to and the number of people directly going onto further education and training’.<sup>23</sup> It is clear that partners are very positive about what has changed in libraries and feel its impact.

3.35 The views, experiences and impacts upon partner organisations highlight the importance of the interplay between the capital investment and the community engagement element of the Community Libraries Programme. Investment in just one aspect would not have created the same impacts.

### **Community involvement**

3.36 The primary impacts on the libraries of this programme therefore have been to provide a process by which the libraries can change the perceptions of what they do (amongst all stakeholders) and as a result get more people and activities into the library. Getting people into the library in this way means that more of these people are going to be involved in what goes on in those libraries.

3.37 The previous evaluation study, in looking at how the programme had supported the MLA’s strategic priorities, identified the impact on communities as a success of the programme, stating that communities were being brought together by the programme.<sup>24</sup> It did, however, qualify that statement with an acceptance that these things take time, and that evidence was varied across the programme. A year later into the work of libraries, and it is possible to identify a greater impact on the communities. It is also possible to see this impact as potentially being the key success of the programme.

3.38 There is evidence of increased involvement and co-production of services, but this varies depending on the library. This is much greater than solely volunteering time, as the activity is in a greater level of partnership with libraries. As covered in Chapter 2, involvement is happening in the libraries in a range of ways:

- Consultation occurred in ways that was fuller and more sustained than had previously been the case in libraries
- Sounding boards/ friends of groups have been set up and are active in supporting libraries and shaping delivery

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<sup>23</sup> *Partner interview 3010*

<sup>24</sup> *Evaluation (June 2010) p.62.*

- People are getting more involved in taking part in projects that happen in their library and are co-producing services
- Libraries are explaining their role more clearly in the broader service and governance landscape of the community
- Management and governance of libraries is being taken on by residents in some places
- Social enterprises and different models of management have, in a small number of instance, also occurred
- Many more people are volunteering in and with libraries

3.39 These different roles can be brought together into four key types of volunteering:

- Volunteers actively involved in **consultation**
- Volunteers active in decision making on **service planning and management**
- Volunteers involved in supporting users to **access core library services**
- Volunteers involved in delivering **added value services**

#### Consultation

3.40 Almost all libraries in the programme describe a more thorough, engaging and detailed consultation approach. There is evidence that this approach to working with people in the design of spaces is something that has been taken on by services more broadly, with specific examples of the approach being used in other capital investment in libraries. Pimlico library in Westminster has recently undergone a detailed consultation period with the local community as a result of the learning and experience of the Community Libraries project in Church Street.

3.41 It was also highlighted how important the consultation was for many libraries as being the starting point for conversations that lasted into other forms of engagement. 'The building gives you a specific reason to speak to people and get them involved, that was why the combination of the building work and the community engagement plan worked so well'.<sup>25</sup>

3.42 Newcastle library also used strong and clear approaches to consultation during the build. This was driven from an ethos that the community should be engaged in having 'the best building and the best service', and that it was the role of library

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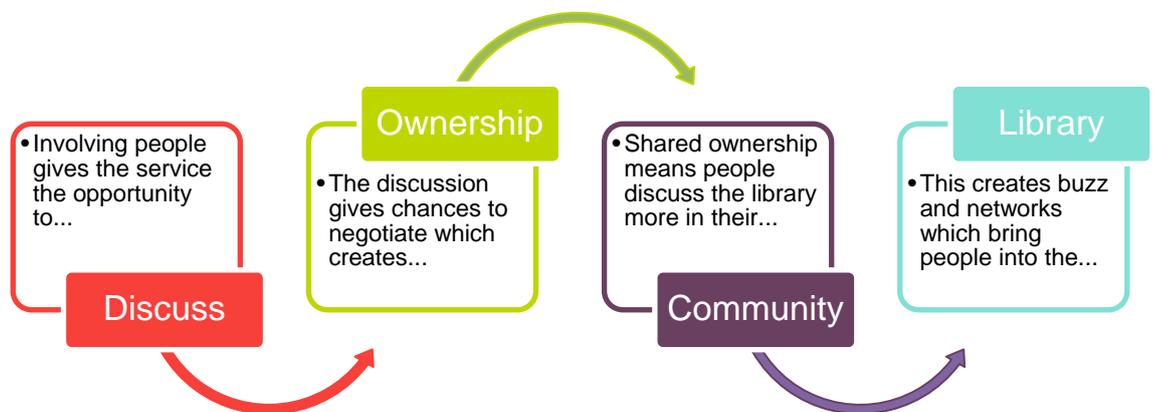
<sup>25</sup> Management interview 1010

staff to work with people on specific things: ‘we’d rather have something to consult about’.<sup>26</sup>

### Service planning and management

- 3.43 Friends of groups or other similar mechanisms of involving people and sharing views and perspectives about the library have occurred in two thirds of the libraries in the ‘Intensive’ and ‘Intermediate’ research groups. Members of those groups, staff who work with them and management staff within the libraries highlight the potential for these groups to impact upon the library through their local knowledge and perspectives. As one member of a Friends of Group stated, ‘the library gets a more community minded service’, with more input on events and activity and more latent knowledge of the area used in designing services.<sup>27</sup>
- 3.44 The different perspectives of staff, management and volunteers collectively contributed to this description of how involving people in the service can work. Figure 3.3 provides an illustration of how consultation can help lead to better outcomes in the library, which is based on the qualitative research in the six intensive libraries.

Figure 3.3 the impact of involvement in service planning



- 3.45 This is not to claim that all libraries have found this process easy. Many have struggled to define the role of the community in library governance to get the right balance of input, interest, decision making and responsibility. Some groups have started and failed, some have stayed more of a social group that focuses more on events. All have found that the experience takes longer and more effort than they

<sup>26</sup> Control interview 5001

<sup>27</sup> Volunteer interview 4008

envisaged in the community engagement plans. Where it has worked, however, there is a strong belief amongst all parties that this is creating a better and more appropriate library for local users. This report has not found evidence that links this process to local capacity, but it is accepted by all stakeholders that local contexts are essential to understand and work with.

- 3.46 The work of the programme suggests that management of the libraries by the community is not impossible but it is incredibly difficult. In terms of management, there are few examples of libraries handing over decision making to be the community in part, and none of full ownership of decision making being handed over.
- 3.47 Although communities engaged in the governance of local services, the process of change was iterative. In Project LiRA in Derby, for example, the Friends Groups for each of the three libraries voted not to be constituted bodies and instead opted to continue as an un-constituted friends group. In North Somerset the management of the community library is run with a local established and respected community organisation, which also forms part of the management of local health living centre. The organisation, which includes local representation, had the structures, processes and capacity to participate in the development of the funding application process to BIG. Community involvement in libraries therefore, has ranged significantly, but it is evident that engagement has been easier and more successful at project level, rather than for overall management.

#### Support accessing to core services

- 3.48 The instances where volunteers have been involved in supporting core services have been quite small across the programme. It typically occurs in areas like supporting users who want help on self service machines. This is quite a narrow view of volunteering, and also one that clouded the distinction for many services between professional and volunteer. It provided extra resource for the library, but was typically directive and not involving of the volunteer. The reason it happened least often is, perhaps, due to this style of volunteering going against the principles of the programme.

#### Delivery of added value services

- 3.49 The biggest area, both in terms of number of volunteers involved and spread across the programme, for volunteer involvement has been in the delivery of added value services. These are the areas where individuals were most keen to get involved, and also where the library needed the most support.

3.50 This approach can be best described as ‘co-production’<sup>28</sup> within the libraries and this is a clear impact of the programme in terms of volume and range of projects that are benefiting from partnerships between community members, library staff and partners. The boxed examples throughout this report highlight how co-production is occurring in a range of ways in these libraries and producing these sorts of outcomes. There is no evidence that this approach is saving money yet, but there is a great deal of evidence that through co-production, libraries are greatly increasing the value their work creates.

### The systemic impact of involvement and volunteering

3.51 A key part of much of the work across the programme has been a more systematic approach to volunteering within the libraries. Volunteering is the mechanism in many libraries that connects individuals to the library, but also connects both individuals and libraries to the broader community. Volunteers across the programme have seen their engagement as being about both the service and their community. ‘I see improvements to the library, to the partner organisations and to the users; but mostly to the community’.<sup>29</sup>

3.52 Volunteering is not new to libraries. All of the libraries that were researched as part of the programme had volunteers in some form prior to the programme, but in many cases this was informal, unstructured and unclear about what was being gained by the service of the volunteer.

3.53 The benefits of volunteering are already known, but in this study there are key ways in which volunteering has embedded the aspirations of the programme. Over 75% of libraries have seen new services developed in response to volunteer suggestions.

3.54 Members of staff have highlighted how the volunteering programme is changing how they view the library and ownership of the service. ‘It’s changed the way I think – now it’s about being “their” library’.<sup>30</sup>This was reinforced by other members of staff, most clearly in the statement: ‘It’s not our library anymore; it’s their library’.<sup>31</sup>

3.55 The following diagram highlights this connection between individuals, libraries and communities through volunteering, and underline the benefits of volunteering:

<sup>28</sup> *The Challenge of Co-Production*, David Boyle and Michael Harris, (December 2009), pp.19-21.

<sup>29</sup> *Volunteer interview 4001*

<sup>30</sup> *Staff interview 2003*

<sup>31</sup> *Staff interview 2004*

*Figure 3.4 – The role of volunteering in connecting the service to the community*



- The library gains from having volunteers because it gains more capacity and more resource to deliver courses/ training/ support, that would not be possible without them
- Volunteers benefit from additional skills and well-being. Volunteering professionals highlight the well known view that libraries are good places for volunteering as they are neutral and safe places with a number of roles available
- Volunteers describe the community role of volunteering more than the service role – they enjoy and value being part of a community and they like the feeling that they are giving back to their community
- Volunteering in a variety of ways creates networks within and between the community that strengthens that community
- Access to a range of community voices and perspectives leads to new services, approaches and the use of latent knowledge within the library

3.56 Overall, it is clear that the impacts on the libraries of the programme have provoked a much stronger degree of involvement in the libraries than had been the case previously. This has occurred in a range of ways that were not necessarily spelled out within community engagement plans. Engagement is an iterative process, and many libraries have discovered this as the programme has matured.

## Secondary Impacts

### Learning and Skills

- 3.57 The previous study provided early evidence of the impacts of that programme on individual users in terms of health and wellbeing and also learning and skills. These broad social outcomes have always been part of the offer of libraries in terms of their role in providing informal and formal learning opportunities, and neutral spaces to read and relax for pleasure. The difficulty with these outcomes has often been one of measurement and evidence, which was again the case in this study.
- 3.58 What is clear, however, is that, through the programme, libraries have been able to expand and increase their offer for individuals around skills and learning. It should be underlined that 'secondary', in this instance, is only in terms of the impact of the programme's resource, and not in terms of the importance of the impacts. There has been a step change in the ability of libraries to support these outcomes (both formally and informally. This has been working with partners to a much greater degree, having more appropriate buildings and facilities and through activity attempting to reach communities. In terms of the 21 intensive and intermediate libraries:
- 75% of libraries have increased their offer of learning and skills activities available for school aged children
  - 75% of libraries have increased their offer of learning and skills activities available for adults
  - 55% of libraries have increased their offer of learning and skills activities available for over 50s
- 3.59 The libraries themselves had very little tracking and outcome data for the partner services, but there are specific individual qualitative case studies, and some detail for particular projects. In Appendix 3 below, there are three project examples that have been examined in more detail and using an SROI assessment methodology. This approach has allowed for some of the outcomes of the individual projects to be mapped and given proxy values to highlight their success. For example, the Homework Club in Nottingham is a project which can be seen to having a strong and positive impact on the attitudes to learning of the young people in the area who use it. With over 200 children on the register for the group, and an average of 15 attendees at each of the three sessions which take place each week, the ability to work with children in terms of improving learning outcomes has been significant. This project came about as a direct response to the capital and revenue resources that were put into the Meadows library.

- 3.60 Another example of learning and skills outcomes achieved are the improvements to English Language through the informal learning offered by reading and conversation groups like those with Bengali women in Westminster. This group, also part of the SROI assessment in Appendix 3, is part of a project that existed before the investment of the programme. The redevelopment of the library has created larger and more appropriate spaces for the group to use. It supports individuals learning English for everyday and conversational needs, and also signposts them onto other courses and qualifications to support their needs.

#### Harrogate Library (North Yorkshire) volunteer

A Polish volunteer joined Harrogate library after being referred by the Volunteer Coordinator, a role funded through the Community Libraries Programme. She was motivated to become a volunteer after seeing the skills and confidence her friends were gaining through volunteering at her children's playgroup, but her biggest motivation was to improve her English. She had friends and family in the area but they too were Polish and so she found it difficult finding opportunities to practice her English.

Having only been a volunteer at the library for 3 months, she felt her English had improved significantly and was a lot more confident talking to staff, volunteers and users in the library.

She valued the library as a place where she could go to use and improve her English, and now wants to share her Polish culture with library users as well as help the library show the Polish community that the library is for them too. She updates the website with Polish information and is working with library staff to set up exhibitions, art and history groups that can share these different cultures. When she first started, her English wasn't good enough to have participated in library activities in this way.

- 3.61 There are also clear examples of the programme's primary impacts leading to impacts around skills and qualifications. An IAG partner organisation that works with one of libraries has evidence that approximately 30% of the people it worked with in that library went onto formal education and training courses.<sup>32</sup> As the reach of those partners increases through the libraries, so too do the outcomes for individuals.
- 3.62 The evidence of Newcastle again highlights that these outcomes are being delivered successfully in non-CLP libraries. Newcastle has a large and expanded

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<sup>32</sup> Partner interview 3010

IT suite and a dedicated training room with appropriate facilities available for hire. What is different is the involvement of people in the production of those outcomes.

### Health and wellbeing

- 3.63 In terms of wellbeing, the increase in impacts on individuals due to an increasing capacity was also evident. 60% of libraries now have a clear offer, delivered by library staff, of wellbeing activities such as Books on Prescription and wellbeing reading groups.
- 3.64 The Make Friends with a Book project in Sandwell is a very clear example of this work being initiated as a result of the programme, and a project that creates a much greater social value than its resource cost. The SROI assessment in Appendix 3 highlights how the work of the project has improved mental health, reduced the need for GP visits, and improved the confidence and wellbeing of individuals. This, and also the Bengali conversation class, highlights the ability for libraries to support wellbeing outcomes through groups, and that these can be quite significant in terms of reducing the need for mental health social workers.
- 3.65 The SROI assessments were not, however, able to capture the value of the wellbeing work of some of the projects in terms of improving community cohesion and increasing individual confidence. The participants of these groups discussed the value of meeting individuals through the groups and getting to know neighbours or people from other communities, but they also found it hard to value those benefits. It is clear that the projects that have been run through the Community Libraries Programme have built upon the neutrality and safety of libraries, and supported community wellbeing, but it continues to be very challenging to evidence and quantify this.
- 3.66 Some of the strongest examples of wellbeing impact as a result of the changes to the libraries, however, come from the particular stories of individuals. This provides serious challenges for collating impact across the programme, but displays the true impact that the changes can have on people's lives.

#### Library user case study

“When I came out of work due to disability there was nothing in the area which offered activities for me. This library has transformed my life, my confidence and I feel part of the community. I do not feel lonely or isolated anymore and have a purpose again. I am learning new things and intend to become a volunteer. I feel accepted and feel they listen to my views; everything I have asked for (art, creative writing, book club, craft, and kid's activities) they have put in place. It has lifted me out of my depression and I feel like a human being again and someone who is part of the community”

### Summary

- 3.67 The evidence shows increasing usage by individual, community groups and partners. There is no doubt that the impact on the libraries is also having a secondary impact on users in terms of learning opportunities, skills, health and wellbeing. It was, however, clear from the process of researching and working with the libraries in the programme that these secondary impacts are not seen as ‘belonging’ to the libraries. The libraries do not track them or build them into their own performance management.
- 3.68 The control library for this study is a very successful library that also delivers secondary outcomes. What is different is the emphasis on involvement, with Newcastle focussing more on providing a service with a competitive offer to deliver demand and use of services, and to deliver services that match the strategic objectives of the local authority.<sup>33</sup>
- 3.69 The evidence suggests that the true impact of the approach, at its best, has been to improve the quality of CLP libraries as platforms of use by the community – involving, engaging and adding value.

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<sup>33</sup> *Control interview 5004*

## 4 Sustaining and advancing community engagement

4.1 This section of the report looks at the current position and plans in place to sustain community engagement activities that have been implemented as a result of the Community Libraries Programme. It will look at the contributory factors toward success and barriers to delivery.

### Key Findings:

- Funding cuts have influenced the libraries drive for change through awareness that their communities will be increasingly relying on them as public services decline (4.4)
- Libraries introduced temporary community engagement posts funded through the programme but there is no evidence that they will continue (4.5)
- The programme was described as a catalyst enabling libraries to take the delivery of community engagement to the next level (4.15)
- Many libraries used the programme as a way to pilot their approach to community engagement providing flexibility to trial projects (4.16)
- Libraries that have concentrated on developing their workforce to actively deliver community engagement have proved more successful at driving change (4.20)
- Where staff have a sound understanding of what community engagement is and what is required of them to deliver it, they have been more engaged in the process and empowered to deliver it (4.21)
- The neutrality of the library as a building and a service is an essential offer to the community. The design and layout of space influences the way the library is used (4.28)
- Defining a clear vision of success from the outset and engaging staff and the community in developing it ensures the library focuses on achieving it is essential for success (4.32)
- Robust internal and external channels to communicate the vision to staff, partners and the wider community have been missing in many instances. This would have helped engage more people with the change and helped publicise exactly what it is the library has to offer (4.37)

### Current plans for sustainability

- 4.2 The picture across the whole programme is very unclear in terms of how the work will be sustained in practical ways. This is partly due to the timing of the research – libraries were in the middle of budget decisions for the coming financial year – but also due to a lack of planning across the libraries in terms of integrating the work.
- 4.3 It has not been possible to quantify across the programme the number of new roles that have been adopted, or the types of policies and approaches that have been formally adopted (although there have been instances of both of these occurring). It has, however, been possible to find the following across the intensive and intermediate group of libraries:
- 25% of libraries have seen formal changes to staff roles and job descriptions altered as a result of the programme.
  - 25% of libraries have connections in terms of corporate or local authority strategies that recognise the work and value of community engagement in libraries
  - 45% of libraries judge community engagement as something that influences the whole service offer
- 4.4 Of the remaining libraries most acknowledge that new approaches to engagement; service development and delivery, particularly on volunteering and partnership working, continues to be an area for development for workforce structure and development – it was often there but had yet to be formalised.
- 4.5 All libraries had acknowledged the current challenges associated with funding cuts and library closures and it was evident that their drive for change was partly influenced by their awareness of the fact that their communities will be increasingly relying on them as public services decrease. “Libraries will go down the route of being a one stop shop”<sup>34</sup>. “It should save money in the long run, running services from the same location. The community are lucky to have somewhere like this to come”<sup>35</sup>. It was evident that these challenges have encouraged library managers and staff to think more about the future direction of the service.
- 4.6 Where libraries have brought in specific community engagement roles there is no evidence that these will be sustained, and this is looking even less likely with the impending funding cuts. Some libraries expected these roles to be temporary and

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<sup>34</sup> Staff interview 2014

<sup>35</sup> Staff interview 2007

so focused on developing staff within the service to deliver community engagement to ensure the concept is embedded into service delivery, but there is no evidence to show libraries have committed to continue the community engagement posts funded by the programme.

- 4.7 There was very little evidence to support the continuation of project activities. Some libraries referred to their increased use of volunteers, demonstrating that they have more capacity to deliver activities now that they have the additional support, but very few libraries had developed project plans to show how the projects developed through the programme would continue.
- 4.8 Where libraries had developed Friends of Groups or governance groups, they were more confident that community engagement could be sustained. In People & Books @ Howden Library (North Tyneside) the library is in the process of developing a five year strategy to sustain community engagement, and in libraries such as Luton, they are implementing advisory panels to work more closely, in an ongoing process, with local users. Overall, most libraries have implemented ways to encourage community ownership and decision making, but there is very little evidence to show that libraries have formalised it and defined it to ensure it is set up to continue.
- 4.9 There is evidence, however, that some of the key impacts outlined in the previous chapter around changing perceptions are now seen as integral to the library service, and some of these impacts on organisational culture and practice will be sustained.

### Changing Organisational Culture and Practice

- 4.10 What is prevalent across the programme is less the tangible changes, but the cultural changes. In many ways the process of change has now occurred and this approach has become part of the library service. There are three key areas of change that are now integral to the library service and likely to be sustained beyond the programme:
- Staff roles
  - Library activity
  - Service culture
- 4.11 **Staff roles** have changed to varying extents in all libraries across the programme. All library staff were able demonstrate a number of different ways of working that had been implemented as a direct result of the programme. In some cases, this new way of working had started to varying degrees before the programme but it was evident that it had encouraged staff to think differently about their attitudes

towards community engagement and improve their understanding of what is expected of them. With a few exceptions, library staff were generally supportive of the way their roles had changed, and had a sound understanding of what was now required of them. Even where staff hadn't been fully supportive, they understood that it's now the 'only way to keep the library going'<sup>36</sup>.

- 4.12 One of the main factors of the programme that has encouraged staff roles to change is the physical layout of the library. Moving away from large counters to remove the 'barriers' between staff and users has increased interaction and has resulted in one of the fundamental changes to the role of library staff. Staff often commented on increased 'floor walking'<sup>37</sup>, being 'freed up to do other things'<sup>38</sup> and being more accessible to users. 'Pods' were introduced to some libraries to remove staff from being behind counters, encouraging them to be more interactive, ask questions and providing a more personal service. The funding was also used to install self-service technology to free up library staff so they can be more interactive with library users. They were described as a 'physical openness that is reflected in their openness'<sup>39</sup>. This way of working has now been built into the design of the library.

#### South Buckinghamshire Reading and Learning Hub (Buckinghamshire)

Due to the installation of self service technology staff now focus on spending their time floor walking, providing assistance to customers and being more customer interaction. Staff were trained to use digital information screens and to use the Buckinghamshire County Councils FAQ information database to provide good customer service to library users.

This has meant that staff are now freed up to deliver community reaching activities; providing information and advice services on learning progression and signposting learners to appropriate services.

- 4.13 The programme has also encouraged staff to think differently about community engagement, and to think more about what it means to deliver it as part of the library service. A number of staff described the library now as a community centre, or their role as a social worker, and whilst these comments were not always made positively, staff were aware that the role of libraries was changing and therefore their role as librarians had to change to adapt to that.

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<sup>36</sup> Staff interview 2008

<sup>37</sup> Staff interview 2015

<sup>38</sup> Staff interview 2009

<sup>39</sup> Management interview 1008

- 4.14 **Library activity** has increased due to the library's increased capacity to deliver more and a wider range of activities for user groups and partners. The programme was often described as the catalyst that has enabled libraries to improve their processes to engage with their community by providing the means with which to take this approach to the next level. "It gave us an opportunity to knock on a door that wouldn't have been open to us before"<sup>40</sup>. This was referred to both in terms of the physical improvements to the building and increased capacity, but often more so as a way to communicate the approach more effectively to staff and stakeholders.
- 4.15 With the new community rooms and improved facilities libraries are now able to provide more and improved services from the library. A number of libraries lacked basic toilet and baby changing facilities, and so by providing these facilities has already enabled libraries to widen their offer to users. The biggest impact has been the additional community rooms which has enabled libraries to broaden their service by providing multi-purpose space for free or at reduced-rates, that isn't restricted to any particular user. It has also meant that libraries have been able to target non-user groups by bringing people into the library that may not require the library's 'traditional' services.

#### Toxteth Library (Liverpool) – increased and targeted library activity

The library has been redesigned and reinvigorated to establish it as an innovative community led learning and information hub. The new library has study areas, meeting rooms, exhibition space, community space, toilets, baby changing facilities, refreshment area and a performance space.

To target delivery mapping for reading and literacy has continued with the appointment of the Reading outreach Worker who has followed up and established 10 reading groups. In April 2010 additional funding was secured through the Neighbourhood Management Team to employ a second Reading Outreach Worker because the value of this work had been recognised and the BLF funded Outreach Worker had reached capacity with 100 reading groups each week. The worker is helping to establish more reading groups and will support staff with further needs mapping, training for volunteers, the collation of statistics and writing case studies to show outcomes using MLA Generic Social& Learning outcomes.

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<sup>40</sup> Staff interview 1010

- 4.16 The extent of what libraries are able to offer depends on the space available, but all libraries were confident that they can continue to increase and improve library activity now that they have more available space.
- 4.17 **Service culture** has changed through providing libraries with the opportunity to build on the work delivered and to transfer and adapt the approach across the library service. It has built on improving networks and partnerships and has transferred these ways of working both across the library service and in some cases more widely across the local authority. A number of libraries discussed ways in which they have been able to transfer lessons learnt, both within the library service and across other public services. Harrogate library established a Partnership Board involving a wide range of partners working alongside volunteers and library staff and are now using it to provide a template for partnership working across the service.

**The Meadows (Nottingham) – Raising the library’s profile across the service**

The Community Libraries Programme has increased the corporate understanding of the library’s contribution to delivering community engagement and empowerment.

The library’s activities have been recognised in the Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy for the local area, significantly raising the profile of the library.

- 4.18 Some libraries described the programme as an opportunity to pilot their approach to community engagement with the funding allowing them sufficient flexibility to be able to trial projects and activities, and then apply the lessons learned to other projects and public services. In Enfield, the neutral environment of the library provided a safe conduit for ongoing community engagement and consultation. Enfield has then used the new approaches, tested through the Community Libraries Programme, to be rolled out across the local authority, providing potential for the service to broaden its reach within health, education, and other public service organisations.

**Factors supporting success and good practice**

- 4.19 This section will look at the key areas of success towards delivering community engagement in libraries, pulling out examples from libraries that have been able to demonstrate sustainable approaches to delivering community engagement.

4.20 From each of the six intensive libraries there are clear strengths that can be pulled out from their approach to community engagement. These are summarised in the table below:

*Figure 4.1 – Key strengths from each of the intensive libraries:*

<b>Staff Roles</b> : Integration of the two roles of librarian and community engagement	<i>Sandwell</i>
<b>Local Governance</b> : Local involvement in library governance – established ‘Friends of the Library’ and a Management Board.	<i>Nottingham</i>
<b>Involvement and Library Activity</b> : Representative community offer – including adult education services to meet local need	<i>Westminster</i>
<b>Service Culture</b> : Integration of the project and its lessons into the wider library service	<i>Lancashire</i>
<b>Partnerships</b> : Developed partnerships and networks and use of volunteers	<i>North Yorkshire</i>
<b>Integration into the local authority</b> - raising the profile of libraries	<i>Newcastle</i>

4.21 Each library is able to demonstrate strengths within different areas of its approach to delivery. This section outlines the key factors that contributed to the success of their approach, and it also identifies other further areas of success within the CLP which are particularly important around neutrality, design and layout.

#### **Workforce /Staff Roles**

4.22 Libraries that have concentrated on developing their workforce to actively deliver community engagement have proven more successful at driving change. Where libraries have ensured that frontline staff have a sound understanding of community engagement and what is required of them to deliver it, they feel more empowered and engaged in the process. In libraries where this has not been the case and community engagement work has continued in parallel to their role as librarians, staff have shown more resistance to accept any change.

### Smethwick and Bleakhouse Libraries (Sandwell) – Workforce/Staff roles

Sandwell implemented its community engagement approach into the core offer of the library service, and one of the most successful ways in which the library did this was by working with frontline staff to encourage them to adapt it to their role as librarians. Community engagement and involvement has been particularly successful in Sandwell through staff involvement with projects and user groups based in the library.

Through the Community Engagement Officer and other staff, the local community have been encouraged to get more involved in co-designing and delivering activities, providing the local community with both empowerment and confidence. These changes are now becoming part of the library culture in Sandwell.

### Local Governance

- 4.23 The extent to which libraries have involved their local community in the governance of the library has ranged considerably, some having thought very little about this and where they have it has proved challenging to set up. In some cases consultation with the local community found that they preferred not to be involved in the library on a governance level. However, where libraries have been successful it has proven to improve their ability to engage with their communities, allowing community representatives to develop more structured groups and projects based on their need and introduce new networks to the library.

### The Meadows Library (Nottingham) – Local Governance

The Meadows Library developed three different management groups each involving residents, partners and stakeholders. The Project Board was set up to manage the delivery of the Community Libraries Programme, and involved residents in the process. The Community Sounding Board (CSB) was a bigger, informal group but representative of the local community, discussing ideas and developing programmes for delivery. From this the Meadows Library Management Board (MLMB) was formed, which only recently formed, will eventually take over the role of the CSB.

Involving community representatives to govern the library service has introduced an element of transparency into the service which has increased the confidence of the local community, further encouraging more to get involved. Local organisations and partnerships also attend, introducing the library to a number of new networks including local resident associations, and children's centres. These networks have enabled the library to learn from its community, which in turn has increased usage in the library.

### Involvement and Library Activity

- 4.24 Where libraries have a thorough understanding of the need of their local community before developing their Community Engagement Plans they have been able to target library activity to meet that need. It has helped these libraries define their target groups, develop programmes of activity to provide the services required by these target groups and in turn has helped them to provide a service to meet local need rather than to duplicate existing services.

#### Church Street Library (Westminster)

The Church Street Library is in a diverse and complex neighbourhood and has been the focus of regeneration initiatives for a number of years - there are a number of local neighbourhood programmes that the library has been in partnership with prior to the Community Libraries Programme.

These partnerships have provided the library with a sound understanding of the needs of the local area, and so the community facilities in the new library have been designed through a community engagement approach to take into account the gaps in the existing provision.

The development of the Church Street Library (Westminster) has enabled the library to improve its resources and facilities, both by improving the quality of the physical space but also increasing the space providing them with the capacity to deliver more services for more people.

### Service Delivery

- 4.25 Added value for money can be gained from the Community Libraries Programme where libraries have approached the programme with the intention to transfer the structures and frameworks developed to other libraries within the service. With the framework for community engagement provided as part of the Programme requirements, libraries can use this to develop their own approaches or rethink existing policies so that they are better able to represent their local community, and to apply them to other libraries and other public services.

### Lancashire Libraries – Service Culture

Lancashire invested its Community Libraries Programme funding across three separate libraries, all of which were in three very different areas in terms of population and community segmentation. The library management staff were working towards linking the Community Engagement Plan into the overall plan for the library service.

By spreading the funding out across three libraries, Lancashire was able to demonstrate a range of successes of their approach to community engagement to the local authority. By showing ways in which the new structures implemented through the Community Engagement Plan were able to work across three different library sites in very different communities, it has meant that they have been able to strengthen their evidence of success.

### Partnerships

- 4.26 Developing partnerships have been beneficial to libraries in a number of ways. Partnerships with the library have improved the service of a number of partner organisations through accessing existing library users, but it has benefited the library service through introducing new users to the library. There are a number of examples where developing certain partnerships have enabled libraries to target non library users and in turn meet some of their outcomes. Partnerships have improved the library's ability to network and which also opens up a number of new communication channels.

### Harrogate Library (North Yorkshire) Partnership Board

North Yorkshire developed a formal partnership board which was developed as one of the key drivers to undertake community engagement in the library. The Board meet once every two months. It enabled the library to fit into the service landscape, encouraging the library to network and find out what other services were available in the area. The library has then worked to adapt its role within the community to facilitate these partnerships and encourage more partnership working locally.

- 4.27 Developing partnerships in Harrogate has encouraged the library to work more with other services in the area including health promotion, adult learning, intergenerational work and volunteering opportunities. HCVS are members of the Partnership Board, and because of their good understanding of the library's aims and objectives they were commissioned to work with the library to establish a volunteer programme through employing a volunteer coordinator to work with the

library. This has provided the library with new resources and the ability to deliver more services in the library with the support of the volunteers.

#### Raising the profile (control)

- 4.28 Although Newcastle was the control library and therefore did not follow the same procedures and requirements to community engagement as the Community Libraries, it demonstrated ways in which it had raised the profile of libraries within its local authority. Newcastle had a history of being the bottom of the priority list within its local authority. It previously did not fit comfortably in council departments and had been moved across departments too frequently. The service was described as stagnant and poorly managed. The development of the city centre library has been part of a process of turning this around, and through becoming more customer focussed it's now 'the friendly side of the council'<sup>41</sup>. Newcastle focused on aligning itself with the objectives of the local authority through supporting its priorities, particularly around digital inclusion, strengthening the economy and making Newcastle a safe place to be. Through this, they have also received more funding. They demonstrated that libraries should think about the broader agendas of their local authority and act as a 'vehicle for council priorities'<sup>42</sup>. This highlighted the risk that if libraries focus too much on local governance and are too community driven, it can potentially disengage the library from its local authority.

#### Further factors

- 4.29 There are a number of other factors that are key to the success of delivering community engagement that were clearly evident across all libraries. The following outlines the areas that were identified by all who use the library as reasons why they do.
- 4.30 The **neutrality** of the library both as a building and as a service was stressed by staff, partners and library users as the biggest offer to the community. Partners in particular used this word to describe the real benefits for running their services from the library. "People benefit from good quality, connected, neutral spaces"<sup>43</sup>. Library users also commented on its openness, its transparency, ways in which it is facilitating to users and also its flexibility as reasons why they use it. Although there is no evidence that this is being jeopardised, it is clearly a core part of the offer and so understanding the value and protecting this is key to maintaining the service.

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<sup>41</sup> Control interview 5006

<sup>42</sup> Control interview 5004

<sup>43</sup> Staff interview 3003

- 4.31 The **design and layout** of the space itself also influences the way in which libraries are used by their communities. The facilities and the design of the internal space had a real impact on the way people use and perceive the library. The improvements to the libraries were often described as ‘bright and airy’<sup>44</sup>, and a number of partners were using the library more as a result of these improvements to the environment. Where libraries had developed their community engagement principles prior to the design of the building they had integrated the design of the building around their principles. Where this had not been the case the additional space and new facilities had confused the library’s core offer by developing its programme of activities based on the space available. This means its offer can be restricted and does not meet the needs of its target group, or the library’s attempt to ensure the space is used means it deters from its core principles.
- 4.32 The extent to which libraries are utilised by their community depends on space, and where libraries are thinking about the types of users and user groups it is targeting it has been able to design the facilities around that. The Meadows Library (Nottingham) designed its community rooms with a separate entrance from the main library so that it can be accessed outside of library opening hours. Designing the library space and to have a clear vision on how the library intends its spaces to be used has helped libraries improve its ability to engage with its targeted user groups. Most libraries have implemented ‘zones’ into the general library space, including Teen Zones, Toddler and Baby Areas, and Quiet Corners.

### Areas for development for libraries

- 4.33 This section will look at the key areas of risk within the libraries approach to community engagement, highlighting where it could have been stronger. It suggests that issues of a **vision**, **staff roles**, **local governance** and **communications** are the four areas where libraries did not explore options fully, or have had the most difficulty in progressing in terms of community engagement. They have been highlighted here for consideration in sustaining community engagement, and they will also inform recommendations in the following section.

### Vision

- 4.34 Recommended in the baseline report, a clear vision is a requirement to achieve any success in community engagement, advising it should be ‘strong and inspiring, with enough detail to allow individuals in the library service, the council and the

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<sup>44</sup> Staff interview 1006

general public to visualise ‘what life would be like’ once the vision has been achieved’<sup>45</sup>.

- 4.35 Libraries should have been encouraged to develop their vision for the future of the library prior to the implementation of the Community Engagement Plan, and to assess their progress against meeting that vision throughout the process. Defining exactly what community engagement is, and what their views of success will look like should be established before the development and implementation of the Community Engagement Plan. Most libraries recognised that the plan had been a large part of their drive for change, but prior to this libraries should have developed a clear vision of what their library will look like beyond the programme, built this into their plan and assessed their progress against it.
- 4.36 One of the risks associated with the Community Engagement Plan is that it has forced libraries to become too target driven. It had been described as ‘prescriptive’<sup>46</sup> and ‘bureaucratic’<sup>47</sup> by some members of staff, which has also prevented libraries from clearly defining their vision for the library and what their view of success is. It may have led some libraries to concentrate less on what community engagement is and how they will define it, and more on achieving their output targets. ‘The CEP was almost too full on. It was really hard to meet it all and got worried at times’<sup>48</sup>.
- 4.37 The Community Engagement Plan has, therefore, supported libraries in driving change, and a number of libraries have successfully demonstrated where they have applied it across the library service, but it should be built around a longer term vision for the library, allowing enough flexibility for each individual library to deliver its objectives without being too target driven. Harrogate Library (North Yorkshire) felt the plan was too detailed at the time to predict the detail over the next three years, but did help them ‘focus the mind and force them to get things done’<sup>49</sup>.

#### Workforce Development /staff roles

- 4.38 Staff roles had changed as a direct result of the Community Engagement Plan but in most cases they had little involvement in the development of it. Nearly all frontline staff said they knew what the CEP was, but many said they had little to do

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<sup>45</sup> *Community Libraries Programme Evaluation: An overview of the baseline for community engagement in libraries (MLA) 2008*

<sup>46</sup> *Staff interview 1010*

<sup>47</sup> *Staff interview 1011*

<sup>48</sup> *Partner interview 3015*

<sup>49</sup> *Management interview 1011*

with delivering it. Staff feeling disengaged from developing the new approach and influencing change in the library can evidentially lead to negative perceptions of this change and their roles as librarians. In the Meadows Library (Nottingham) difficulties encouraging frontline staff to engage in the plan resulted in tensions between the community engagement officers and the frontline staff, and therefore a feeling of reluctance among staff to accept change. Engaging library staff in the development of the plan and vision for the library will empower them to work with this approach.

- 4.39 The baseline study had identified that frontline staff are the most critical part of the organisation for delivering community engagement because of their direct contact with individuals and groups who use the library. It was evident, however, that not all libraries had built in workforce development and capacity building into their delivery plans for community engagement. Their important role and close relationships with library users mean that frontline staff need to be empowered by the process and not disengaged from it.

#### Local Governance

- 4.40 Creating User/Friend groups and community-led governance structures will help the library develop its vision through the direct process of asking for community opinions on transforming the building, the organisational structure and what the library, as a community library, should offer. As mentioned previously, the extent to which libraries focused on establishing community-led governance structures varied considerably, but the baseline report identified that working with different community segments to identify their requirements for social activity is a strong starting point<sup>50</sup>.

- 4.41 It was clear that where libraries had developed community led governance structures to any degree, they were able to define a clearer vision for the library, more directed to the need of that community. Project LiRA in Derby, the Friends Groups for each of the three community libraries voted not to become constituted bodies and instead, opted to continue as an un-constituted friends group. They continued to participate in making decisions on the new library such as opening hours, facilities available and volunteer activity, and remained as a panel with a bank account to raise funds for the library.

#### Communications

- 4.42 Libraries that had developed methods to ensure they were effectively communicating that the libraries were changing were more likely to engage people

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<sup>50</sup> *Community Libraries Programme Evaluation: An overview of the baseline for community engagement in libraries 2008*

with that change. The baseline study identified that library authorities had not yet fully developed their approach to communicating this, and, although some libraries had been better at it than others, the situation remains similar.

- 4.43 Firstly, **internal communication** with staff evidentially helps engage and empower frontline staff. Two way communications between management and frontline staff is important to ensure staff have fully understood the concept of community engagement and what it means for their role
- 4.44 The relationship between library staff and users means that word of mouth engagement through frontline staff is critical.<sup>51</sup> Where staff have not felt inspired to deliver the vision for the library or have resisted plans to change there is a risk this will be communicated to library users.
- 4.45 There is also little evidence of frameworks in place for effective **external communication**. Few libraries had developed communication and marketing strategies, and where they had they were often basic or not utilised as well as they should be. A number of libraries referred to the build of the library as a publicity drive in itself, and that improved networks and partnerships were a good way to communicate to the wider community, but few libraries had developed ways to target communications to non-users, or ways in which they would continue to publicise the library beyond the programme.
- 4.46 The key values outlining why people use the library listed previously in this section should be built into the library's communication framework and targeted to groups who may not know precisely what the library has to offer. Whilst it's a key reason why stakeholders choose to use the library, it should not be assumed that everyone is aware that these are its key principles.

### Summary

- 4.47 The community engagement is being continued in libraries to different degrees, and the programme has highlighted areas of great success in supporting community engagement that could be used to inform work in other libraries or other services.
- 4.48 The programme has also discovered four areas which have resulted in community engagement being held back, and these should be addressed in future work.

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<sup>51</sup> *Community Libraries Programme Evaluation: An overview of the baseline for community engagement in libraries 2008*

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

### Key findings

- The programme has been a success in terms of involving people in the running and delivery of services in libraries (5.2)
- The CEP *combined* with the capital investment is an essential part of delivering the aims of the programme, and where this has been supported with revenue funding, it is clear that the libraries have had more opportunity to resource the work and understand it. This has allowed community engagement to develop more clearly in those libraries (5.3)
- There remains a lack of consistency in understanding community engagement and this can make it harder to involve staff and others in the process – sometimes at the expense of opportunities (5.5)
- Whilst sustaining the work is going to be a challenge for some libraries, the shift in culture and attitude created by the programme will ensure that many of the principles are maintained (5.9)

### Conclusions

- 5.1 This evaluation was designed to update the evaluation findings from June 2010 and show where libraries have progressed, and where libraries struggled to develop their engagement activities further, and why. It attempts to answer two major questions. Firstly, how well have the Community Libraries understood the community engagement approach and translated it into meaningful action. Secondly, does a ‘community engagement’ approach produce better services and outcomes for the local community?
- 5.2 On the first question, this report shows the libraries have made significant progress over the previous year. We found significant evidence of the following elements of the community engagement approach.
- Local residents are more actively involved in the development, delivery and management of library services
  - There are increased numbers of community groups and activities in libraries, such as youth groups, older people’s clubs and reading groups
  - There are stronger relationships with community service providers, particularly learning providers

- 5.3 The impacts would have been significantly reduced if this way of working was not a condition of BIG capital grants. For most it has enabled them to do more, whilst for others it has produced a whole new way of working. Although there has only been one control library in this study, this does support the finding that with the extra, ring fenced revenue resource, libraries are able to commit the time and effort to community engagement as an important role in itself, and not just an add-on to other roles. The experience of this evaluation is that success and impacts follow from the commitment of revenue resource to the process.
- 5.4 There is a strong body of developing practice, some of which we have been able to highlight in this report. Particular areas of progress, highlighted in this and the previous evaluation, include the provision of additional services by partners, work to establish groups for younger users, and provision of more volunteering opportunities. The best libraries have made effective use of additional revenue resources, recruited or created dedicated community engagement staff, and managers have taken a pro-active and enthusiastic approach to neighbourhood and partnership working.
- 5.5 It has not been straightforward, and not all libraries in the programme have lived up to the potential of the programme. There is still a misunderstanding of what is meant by community engagement, and the average library has worked more at the 'informing' and 'consulting' end of the spectrum of involvement, rather than fully embraced 'deciding' and 'acting together'. Also, more should be done to link new groups and partners using the library to core objectives for the service itself, such as reader development. Other areas for development include internal and external communications, better visions and more training for frontline staff.
- 5.6 Answering the second question is more challenging, because the programme did not set thresholds for success or develop a clear set of indicators. The evidence we were able to collect suggest that programme has had a substantial positive impact on user visits, even taking into account the likely impact of refurbishment work. Broadly speaking, about a quarter of users were more active, and about one in ten made more use of new services and groups. There was less evidence that there had been more book issues, which is partly explained by the focus on new spaces and extra groups. In addition, a lack of good local management information prevented us being able to quantify the extent to which the new users came from disadvantaged or under-represented groups.
- 5.7 An analysis of impact across the programme and with a 'control' library highlights how the programme has built residents' and partners' understanding and ownership of activity in libraries. It has also encouraged staff to think more creatively about their role in way that is different to mainstream approaches to

‘service development’ and ‘modernisation’. The evaluation has found evidence of a positive logic chain that links community engagement activity to more responsive services, by making use of volunteers’ knowledge and networks.

- 5.8 All libraries have the potential to deliver an excellent service, but the focus on community engagement has provided an involvement process that in these libraries can be seen as an impact in itself. People are considering both the service and the community, and aligning the two. The community engagement is a way to ensure that the library is relevant to local people as it changes. As an example, one volunteer described it: ‘As services get modernised and technology changes, it is important to root people and give services a local link – otherwise people feel disconnected from change’.<sup>52</sup>
- 5.9 Sustaining the community engagement activity is likely to be a challenge in the current financial circumstances. We found mixed evidence of systematic planning ahead, but a significant commitment to sustaining the approach. The Community Library programme has also had a significant influence on consultation and engagement standards in other libraries.

### **Policy and practice implications**

- 5.10 There are risks to libraries in the future if they are not maximising usage locally and their responsiveness to local need: the community engagement approach can help with that process. It is also important to recognise better how a community engagement approach can aid the libraries deliver service changes and meet their own objectives. However, it is easy to under-estimate the skills and techniques required to make it work, and the importance of ensuring value for money – the question of value, as highlighted in Appendix 3, is an important one for libraries to consider and there are mechanisms for them to continue to improve how they articulate their value to the community and others.
- 5.11 We believe there is potential to:
- improve skills and knowledge of a community engagement approach for libraries and other services
  - raise awareness of the changes and achievements in libraries, as there remains a large perception gap

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<sup>52</sup> *Volunteer interview 4008*

- better link community engagement to other policy agendas, such as service re-design and localism to ensure it has buy-in across library services and the support of other services

5.12 The following suggestions illustrate how these broad objectives could be taken forward by different stakeholder groups:

#### Library Managers and staff:

- The adoption of a self-assessment template or similar tool to encourage good practice
- Greater use of community profiles, community engagement plans and a clear vision for community engagement, with a focus on SMART objectives and monitoring
- Systematic training and staff development in community engagement skills, including more use of external expertise and resident/user feedback
- A greater focus on promotion and marketing library services in local areas

#### Library service leads

- Lead partnership working on behalf of libraries, developing strong relationships and new services and projects.
- Build community engagement into workforce development/human resource strategies to include community engagement functions and roles
- Explore new governance models that can be tailored to local circumstances
- Recognise achievements in community activity, for example volunteer awards.

#### Local Authority services

- Create direct links between corporate community engagement and customer service plans
- Provide data, analytical and policy support to library managers for profile and planning purposes
- Encourage library participation in any locality-based governance and neighbourhood management structures,
- Use libraries to pro-actively support delivery of other targets, for example through co-location

#### MLA/DCMS/ACE

- Develop evidence base for community engagement in cultural services, including more clarity on expected outcomes and resource implications

- Create user-friendly and accessible guidance on community engagement, working with other partners
- Increase profile of community engagement in performance and reward systems

#### Big Lottery Fund

- Strengthen further the emphasis on revenue funding and service change in future capital programmes
- Make use of significant good practice in capital aspects of CLP not covered by this research
- Develop policy and evidence base for community involvement and engagement, drawing on experience of other sectors and settings.
- Consider more explicitly evaluation design and methodology issues as part of future programme development work, ensuring shared definitions and standards are in place from the start of the programme to allow evaluations and updates to use similar and comparable metrics of success

## Appendix 1 – Library Case Studies (intensive)

### Lancashire

#### Background

**Your Space** aimed to transform three quite different buildings, Lancaster, Haslingden and Colne libraries into flexible spaces that promoted community use.

Lancashire Library and Information Service is delivered through a network of 74 libraries, 11 mobile libraries and 6 prison libraries. The **Your Space** project involves three different libraries in different communities and very different buildings. Haslingden Library operates in a two storey town centre building opened in 1860, as a Mechanics Institute. Lancaster is a historic city, accounts for 35% of the districts population and is the urban core of the county. The library is in a Grade 2 listed building in the heart of the city. Colne is a town in the east of the county surrounded by many old villages, the library is a purpose built 1960s town centre building in a prime town centre location

In 2007 Lancashire secured £1,236,380 capital and £157,731 revenue funding from the Big Lottery Community Library fund to refurbish and improve these libraries. Haslingden opened in April 2009, Lancaster in November 2009 and Colne in January 2010.

#### Process

The revenue funding was used to appoint a full-time Project Manager to oversee the delivery of the project including the community engagement plan.

Friends Groups were established in each library early on in the project to enable input to the design process, an approach not previously adopted by the service.

The council provided funding for one Volunteer Services Co-ordinator to develop and implement the volunteering programme.

#### Outcomes

- All three libraries offer flexible space and meeting rooms for hire which are used by partners and community organisations to deliver a wide range of activities
- A new policy for volunteering was established with 85 volunteers recruited to work across the three sites
- staff commitment and understanding of the value of working with volunteers has increased

- the meeting room in Lancaster Library is used once a week by the youth service to deliver activities for young people
- Haslingden and Lancaster libraries established Young Peoples forums to help design and run services for young people, including the 'Get it Loud' programme in Lancaster Library
- New groups have been established such as a teenage book group in Colne and a Writing Group in Haslingden
- Other service providers are using the libraries to promote and deliver services e.g. Job Centre providing online training on saving money
- Partners understanding of the value of libraries as neutral and safe spaces for community use has increased

### Sustaining and enhancing community engagement

The Friends Groups for each library are continuing and will work with each library to develop and improve the service. The Friends Groups will be consulted on library performance and new services, will make suggestions for services and activities, deliver events and activities and also seek funding to develop new services.

The physical changes to the libraries will enable Lancashire to sustain community engagement in the three libraries. The flexible space allows all three libraries to host public meetings, events and activities that they were not previously able to do. As a result library staff are undertaking more outreach to inform people and partners about the new facilities and to develop a programme of activities.

The volunteer programme developed as part of the community library project is being extended to the rest of the library service and beyond to the council run museum service. The service plans to integrate community engagement activities and targets in the 2011/12 service plan.

### Conclusion

As with the majority of the libraries in the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' groups, Lancashire did not establish a shared definition of community engagement and did not undertake a needs assessment of the skills, competencies and behaviours staff at all levels would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working.

Developing a shared vision of community engagement and the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to sustain these activities will help the service plan and

deliver organisational and workforce development activities to improve community engagement in the future.

The formation of Friends Groups in each of the libraries and Young People forums in Haslingden and Lancaster are valuable formal mechanisms that have helped Lancashire to define a clear and shared vision for the libraries. The new flexible space has changed the way staff work, their perceptions and understanding of the library offer and also changed the perceptions of partner and community providers. Partnership working has strengthened through the involvement of libraries in the Adult and Social Care Community Engagement board.

## North Yorkshire

### Background

**New Look, No Shush – Harrogate Library igniting the Imagination** aimed to create a ground breaking project on services delivered from central Harrogate by re-designing the existing building to create a flexible and innovative space that will be attractive to all members of the community.

North Yorkshire Libraries and Information Service delivers services through 42 libraries, 10 mobiles and a Supermobile. Harrogate's population is 98% white, with a population with slightly less young people and slightly more older people than average. Over the last six to seven years the town has seen a significant increase in migrant workers seeking employment opportunities, with the majority from Poland. It is a prosperous dormitory town (although with some pockets of deprivation) and as such has some of the highest property prices in England.

The library is situated in the town centre close to the high quality retail offer. It is the main library for the district. As a town centre library the community profile includes people living nearby, but also people visiting the town centre as shoppers, workers and tourists. The library was never as large as was planned, even 100 years ago, and the provision was seriously inadequate with poor access. ICT services were provided in a very small, cramped, poorly ventilated portakabin at the side of the building which was inadequate to meet need or demand.

The project aims to be accessible to all and increase the opportunity for voluntary, community groups and other providers to deliver relevant services. However, specific target groups for the project will be older people, as the number of people over 60 in Harrogate is set to increase by 58% over the next 25 years, and migrant workers, whose numbers have been growing in the area.

In 2007, North Yorkshire Libraries secured £1.5m capital funding from the Big Lottery to match funding of £2m to refurbish Harrogate Library. The refurbished library opened in October 2010.

### Process

North Yorkshire established a Partnership Group of key stakeholders, community representatives and local staff. The group engaged key partners, including Age Concern, Better Government for Older People, Harrogate and District Access Group, and the Harrogate Council for Voluntary Service Ethnic Project Worker. It has been meeting on a regular basis since January 2008.

The project was managed and delivered by library staff as the BIG grant was wholly allocated to the capital elements of the project. The community engagement activities were led and delivered by library managers. Although, revenue funding was committed to building capacity for volunteering and Harrogate Capacity for Voluntary Services were commissioned to appoint and manage a Volunteer Services Co-ordinator to deliver the volunteering element of the project with the library service. Commissioning the volunteering programme through the CVS brought a considerable amount of knowledge and skills of volunteering directly to the project in a way that may not have been realised if the library had itself appointed a member of staff to co-ordinate this activity.

### Outcomes

- The Partnership Board has influenced the design and services in the refurbished library, particularly services for ethnic minorities
- The internal design of the library has changed significantly – the layout is more spacious with more natural light entering the building, primarily as a result of removal of the existing roof and replacement by a “lantern” roof
- The capacity of the library has increased by more than 250 sq m. The increase in space and new layout has seen an increase in the stock on shelves, with 35% of new stock when the library opened
- A new and strategic approach has been taken to volunteering with the adoption of a volunteering policy as a direct outcome of the community library project
- A Friends of Harrogate Library group has been established
- Older volunteers were targeted to reflect the demographic of users and local community with 49 volunteers recruited to deliver added value services to date, including assisting at events and activities
- Members of the Partnership Board regularly attend community activities and events and in their role promote the library and encourage feedback

- The Partnership Board has identified and developed new services including learning and support for older people to access library services

### Sustaining and advancing community engagement

The Partnership Board enabled North Yorkshire to develop partnerships that influenced the design of the library and service offer in the planning stages. The programme of activities, specifically the learning offer, has been designed with active input of partners on the board bringing their knowledge and their networks to benefit the library. The Partnership Board will continue to meet every two months to oversee the library programme and add value to service planning.

The Friends Group is an important new initiative in North Yorkshire as previously only one library across the county had established a Friends Group. The Friends Group and large bank of volunteers will continue to work closely with Harrogate Library on the ground to develop and improve services and increase ownership and use. The physical changes to the library will support staff interacting with library users, with the removal of large counters and the introduction of 'Pods'.

A Partnership Board has been established to oversee the development of Starbeck Library to ensure that the learning from working through a formal mechanism to involve partners and community representatives in Harrogate is taken forward across the service.

### Conclusion

However, as with the majority of libraries in the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' groups Harrogate did not have a clear and shared definition of community engagement and in some part did not see community engagement as different from service development. The service also did not undertake an assessment of the skills, behaviours, attitudes and knowledge that staff at all levels would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working.

Developing a shared vision of community engagement and the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to sustain these activities will help the service plan and deliver organisational and workforce development activities to improve community engagement in the future.

The formation of the Partnership Board helped Harrogate to define the vision for the library and opened channels of communication that they may not have previously accessed. The physical changes to the library, including increased spaces for other service providers to promote services, meeting rooms, improved IT facilities has contributed to increased footfall and use in line with the state aims of the project. The plans to sustain the Partnership Board and to work closely with

them and the Friends Group demonstrate the libraries commitment to take forward new ways of working developed through the community library project.

The service did not use any of the funding to support revenue activity providing the capacity to deliver the capital and community engagement plans from within existing library staff resources. Harrogate recognised that the service did not have the capacity to deliver the ambitious volunteer programme and so identified library revenue to secure extra capacity and expertise in this area. Commissioning the CVS to recruit a member of staff to work from their offices and develop the library volunteer programme resulted in a step change in volunteering in Harrogate in the first months of opening.

## Nottingham

### Background

'**Meadows Alive!**' aimed to transform the existing library by extending and reconfiguring the library to fulfil its potential to develop into a hub for service providers locally and become the venue of choice for reading, information, learning and community activity.

Nottingham Library and Information Service deliver services through 17 libraries, a mobile library and housebound service. The Meadows Library is in the Bridge ward of the City on the north bank of the River Trent that has recognisable patterns of deprivation. The library serves a well-defined and densely populated community (pop 7,870 in approx 3,800 households (2001 Census)), with unemployment at almost twice the national average (4.9%). Overall the area is ranked among the top 10% most deprived wards in the country and ranked by the City Council as the fifth most deprived ward in the city.

The area had been identified by the City Council as the focus for a new approach to neighbourhood transformation with the adoption in August 2009 of the Neighbourhood Plan for the Meadows, a new approach for integrated interventions in the locality by all agencies. The community facilities in the area including the library were considered outdated and with limited potential for increased usage. Whilst the Meadows Library had a community room it could only be accessed from within the main library. Although they continue to share a main entrance the community room can now be made self contained (with refreshment and toilet facilities) for use when the main library is closed. The '**Meadows Alive!**' project is seen as a key initiative strengthening the plans to transform the area.

The project has targeted children under 5, young people between 11 – 19 and new arrivals, refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2007, Nottingham secured £1,105,550 capital and £275,913 revenue funding from the Big Lottery Community Library fund for the '**Meadows Alive!**' project to refurbish and extend the Meadows Library. The refurbished library opened in August 2009.

### Process

A Community Sounding Board (CSB) was established in December 2008 of 30 people, of whom 20 regularly attend monthly meetings. The CSB have been involved in decisions on the design of the library and services, some procurement and volunteering to support library staff to deliver activities. The revenue funding was used to employ a Project Manager, 1 x 18.5 Community Engagement Worker and 2 part-time Community Support Workers and 1 part-time Homework Club worker.

### Outcomes

- Involvement of partners and community representatives in design discussions led to the inclusion of a refreshment area, meeting rooms, a designated space for teenagers to use, public toilets, a terraced garden and a new entrance to the existing community room to link it to the public space in the library
- The new library provides dedicated areas for different groups and activities as well as a reading terrace in the garden
- A wide range of learning activities is delivered in response to the needs of the community. These include English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, more access to ICT, skills for life, employability courses, homework clubs, reading groups, citizenship and children's learning activities
- The CSB identify events and services that the community would like to see take place in the library and often identify volunteers from the group who will lead on or assist with these events
- A focus group of young people from the local secondary school identified new services, including the R Factor, a summer reading challenge for teens, increasing teen issues by 150% in the summer of 2010
- The profile of the library with key partners is higher
- The partnership with local schools has been significantly strengthened with sharing of data and joint planning on the homework club

- A new partnership has been formed with the manager of the Education Improvement Project representing all schools in the area – the opportunity for long term and strategic planning is increased
- The corporate understanding of the contribution of the library to delivering community engagement and empowerment is increased.
- The profile of the library in this arena has been raised with the library recognised in the community engagement and empowerment strategy for Area 8

### Sustaining and advancing community engagement

The Project Manager and community development worker posts were key in increasing the library's capacity to deliver community engagement. The responsibility for delivering the successful capital project and community engagement programme was held by the Project Manager who was seconded from another part of the council. This post was also responsible for managing the staff appointed with BIG funding to deliver the community engagement as well as the Homework Club officer.

The Project Manager had no line management responsibility for the staff in the Meadow Library. Meadows Library has a Library Manager who reports to a Senior Library Manager who has responsibility for more than one library. As a result there were some difficulties encouraging front-line staff to engage with the community engagement plan resulting in tensions between the community engagement officers and frontline staff, and therefore a feeling of reluctance among staff to accept change.

However, there is a high level of commitment to continue to work through a high level of community engagement with the establishment of a constituted, Meadows Library Management Board, involving library staff and representatives from the CSB meeting quarterly and taking operational and strategic decisions on the library. In addition, the community engagement and homework club staff will continue to be funded through the library revenue budget when the BIG funding ends.

### Conclusion

Those libraries that have concentrated on developing their workforce to actively deliver community engagement have proven more successful at driving change. Whilst Nottingham appointed workers with community development skills and knowledge the project management structure did not maximise the opportunity for workforce development of library staff. The understanding was therefore most developed in the project team and library and service development managers.

Front line staff understanding is increasing as they become more directly involved in events and through attending the CSB.

As with the majority of the libraries in the 'intensive' and 'intermediate' groups, Nottingham did not establish a shared definition of community engagement and did not undertake a needs assessment of the skills, competencies and behaviours staff at all levels would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working. Developing a shared vision of community engagement and the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to sustain these activities will help the service plan and deliver organisational and workforce development activities to improve community engagement in the future.

A key finding of the evaluation, is that where projects established a formal mechanism to involve community representatives and partners the vision for the library was focused more clearly on the direct needs of the community and introduced channels of communication they may not have otherwise have been able to access. The CSB provided a dynamic and inclusive partnership, directly influencing the design of the building and service offer. This group will be maintained in the future and provide a key community link to the management of the library in the future with representatives on the Meadows Library Management Board.

The changes to the library setting allied with the close working relationship with the community and partners has enabled Meadows to become a hub for local community activity that was not previously possible. There has been a step change in access to local services in the library and in the partnership with education at both strategic level and on a day to day basis with local schools.

## **Sandwell**

### **Background**

The community library project aimed to transform Smethwick and Bleakhouse Libraries to create well-designed, safe spaces that would foster community involvement and activity.

Sandwell Library and Information Service delivers services through 19 community libraries, 2 mobile libraries and a housebound service. Smethwick Library is located on Smethwick High Street in a diverse and transient community, in an area that has benefited from a number of regeneration programmes. Bleakhouse Library is located in a more locally defined neighbourhood, serving a community that's been using the library for many years.

The project has targeted people from Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Caribbean backgrounds, newcomers to the UK, people without level 2 qualifications, job seekers, families with young children and people aged over 50. The target groups were identified on the basis of detailed demographic and community profiling, including that of library users.

In 2007, Sandwell Library and Information Service secured £1,124,669 capital and £303,979 revenue funding from Big Lottery to refurbish Smethwick and Bleakhouse Libraries. Smethwick Library did not close during refurbishment but was officially opened in July 2009. Bleakhouse Library opened to the public in March 2010.

### Process

A Project Board was established including representatives from Bleakhouse Friends Group, Friends of Sandwell Archives, User Groups at Bleakhouse and Smethwick, Town Team, the volunteer bureau, learning providers and a volunteer representative from each library. The Project Board has met regularly to contribute to discussions on design of the library and service and to monitor progress with the capital and community engagement plans.

The revenue funding was used to fund two days a week of a Programme Manager, and the appointment of a full-time Community Development Manager (CDM). The Programme Manager is a member of the Library Management Team and the Community Development Manager is a member of the Library Development Team (LDT). The role of the CDM is to deliver the community engagement plan and work with Community Library Managers to build the capacity of staff at Smethwick and Bleakhouse libraries to deliver effective community engagement.

### Outcomes

- Smethwick Library re-configured to deliver improved community rooms and a new café area
- Bleakhouse Library has three new user friendly community rooms and improved facilities; a children's library and a vending area as a result of an extension
- Staff knowledge of the needs and aspirations of the community has improved
- New Volunteer Policy in place with volunteers supporting library staff in a range of ways
- Staff at the front-line working closely with partners and community organisations using the libraries
- Staff understand and value the contribution of volunteers

- Partners understanding of the value of libraries as a neutral space has increased
- New partnerships formed and existing partnerships strengthened
- More users and new groups using the library
- New reading development activities developed in direct response to the community – e.g. LGBT Reading Group

### Sustaining and advancing community engagement

In both Bleakhouse and Smethwick libraries the understanding of staff at all levels of the needs and aspirations of the community has increased as a result of the continued focus on active community engagement. The CDM has played a key role in developing existing partnerships, identifying new partnerships and working with staff in the libraries to feel comfortable with new ways of working.

The Project Board will continue to meet now both libraries are open and the service will ensure succession plans are in place to sustain community engagement in both libraries. The changes to the libraries have resulted in spaces that have transformed the way the service involves users and partners in service delivery. In Smethwick, the café is run by a third sector partner, Options for Life, who provide training and volunteering opportunities for people with learning disabilities. The level of community activity in both libraries has increased significantly with activities being run by the staff, partners and volunteers. The community library project was the catalyst for developing a Volunteer Policy in consultation with staff and volunteers. This policy has subsequently been implemented in other libraries in Sandwell.

Each of the libraries have targets for community engagement integrated into the Local Action Plans for 2011/12 and good practice from the BIG Lottery Libraries will continue to be delivered across the service over the next 12 months and will be monitored by the Community Engagement working group.

### Conclusions

The formation of the Project Board has helped to develop a clear and shared vision for Smethwick and Bleakhouse libraries in a way that would not have been possible without this forum. The appointment of new staff with skills and knowledge in community engagement was a significant contributor to the delivery of community engagement activities in Sandwell. The inclusion of the CDM as part of the Library Development Team was important in ensuring that communication between the community library project and the service was effective and two way.

The CDM role has provided support to building an understanding of community engagement and by working with Community Library Managers and staff has changed ways of working in Smethwick and Bleakhouse Libraries. As with other Local Authorities, this opportunity has enabled Sandwell to deliver a shared definition of community engagement and undertake a workforce needs assessment of the skills, knowledge and behaviours staff would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working. However, the approach to building capacity taken in Sandwell has seen staff roles and ways of working change significantly, with the new ways staff are required to work set out clearly in policies and processes. For instance, Sandwell have developed the role of a “buddy” for front-line staff working with individual partners and community organisations using the library.

Whilst Sandwell did not conduct a robust assessment of workforce development needs at the beginning of the project, they have now have identified the skills, knowledge and behaviours staff need to deliver effective community engagement. In the future, the local library action plans and the overall service plan will deliver organisational and workforce development activities to continue to deliver and improve community engagement.

## Westminster

### Background

**Digging Deep to Transform Church Street Library** aimed to transform the existing library by opening up the lower library floors previously occupied by library offices and a home library service and extending into the adjacent garage to create a new learning centre.

Westminster Libraries delivers services through 11 lending libraries, two reference libraries and a home library service. Church Street Library is located on a busy high street in a diverse and complex neighbourhood, ranked among the top 20% most deprived wards in the country. 80% of homes are social housing, 35% of adult residents have no qualifications and over 30 languages are spoken in this small geographical area.

At the time of seeking funding Church Street Library was not adequate in size to deliver the reading, information and learning services required by the community. The public space occupied only the ground floor of a three storey building and experienced heavy demand with 4,000 members and 200,000 annual visits.

The project has targeted young people, community and voluntary groups and older people. The number of 11 – 19 year olds in the area is 34%, significantly higher than the average across Westminster but the existing library had very few facilities for this age group. The area is home to a large number of community and voluntary organisations placing much demand on the library space available to deliver events and activities.

In 2007, Westminster Libraries secured £963,297 capital and £102,800 revenue funding from the Big Lottery to refurbish Church Street Library. The refurbished library opened in August 2010.

### Process

Westminster Library Services commissioned Church Street Neighbourhood Management to produce the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) and to kick-start detailed consultation about the library refurbishment with both residents and stakeholder agencies between January and March 2008.

A Community Steering Group was formed to oversee the delivery of the project and to ensure that the building and services were designed in response to local need. The group included local residents and neighbourhood officers with significant experience in working in neighbourhood management/community development.

The revenue funding was used to create a full time, 2 year post of Project Development Co-ordinator who led on the development and implementation of the project with specific focus on community engagement and working in partnership. The post-holder was based in the Church Street Neighbourhood Office and therefore widely accessible to local people and partner agencies. The commitment to community engagement was highly visible and the ability of the post-holder to build their knowledge and experience of local issues and dynamics was strengthened as a result of the location.

### Outcomes

- Involvement of partners and community representatives in design discussions led to the inclusion of community spaces for hire (2 x 1:1 meeting rooms), 1 Community Space for 20 – 40 people depending on layout and a learning centre fully equipped with 14 PCs
- The community engagement approach and new facilities have allowed the library to offer some new opportunities for volunteers in direct response to volunteers' suggestions, such as support for learners

- Young volunteers contributed to the design and naming of their area and participated in stock selection, including book buys at suppliers for fiction, comics and games and DVDs
- Partnership with key partners such as the Youth Service and PCT has been strengthened – in part because of the community engagement approach but also because the new library has spaces and facilities that allow these partners to deliver events to meet their objectives in the library
- Partners' understanding of the value of the library as a safe neutral space and with a particular reach to communities is now better understood
- A new partnership with the Westminster Youth Service has been established with a youth worker present in the library to deliver information, advice and guidance both on a drop-in basis and by appointment

### Sustaining and advancing community engagement

In Church Street Library staff understanding of the needs and aspirations of the community has increased as a result of the significant amount of consultation undertaken on the building design and services in the new library. The confidence of front-line staff in working with partners and young people has markedly improved. The ability of staff to communicate the library offer in local community networks has improved, as has the offer itself with the new spaces for working with partners and community organisations.

The service has recognised the benefits of early engagement in design discussions to the positive outcomes in Church Street and so have established a steering group, with community representation, to oversee the development of Pimlico Library.

The service is in the process of establishing a new steering group to maintain the involvement of local stakeholders in the on-going management of Church Street Library.

### Conclusion

Formation of a Community Steering Group helped Church Street to define a clear vision for the library, focused on the expressed needs of the community and introduced channels of communication they may not otherwise have been able to access. However this group has been disbanded now the library is open and there are no plans to engage community representatives and partners in the on-going management of the library through a formal partnership mechanism, although engagement will continue with partners on an individual level.

The inclusion of different spaces and services in response to extensive consultation and engagement in the design phase to support community activity has enabled Church Street Library to become a hub for the local community in a way that was not previously possible. There has been a step change in the quantity and quality of learning offered in Church Street to children, young people, adults and over 50s.

Those libraries that have concentrated on developing their workforce to actively deliver community engagement have proven more successful at driving change. Westminster did not appoint staff with this expertise as they have well-developed capacity to undertake service development through central roles, e.g. Bengali Outreach Officer, Lifelong Learning Co-ordinator.

However, Westminster did not have a clear and shared definition of community engagement and in some part did not see community engagement as different from service development and did not undertake a needs assessment of the skills, competencies and behaviours staff at all levels would need to embrace community engagement as a new way of working.

Developing a shared vision of community engagement and the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to sustain these activities will help the service plan and deliver organisational and workforce development activities to improve community engagement in the future.

## **Newcastle (control)**

### **Background**

The new City Library in Newcastle did not receive Big Lottery funding and is included in the evaluation as a control.

Newcastle City Libraries delivers services through 18 libraries, a home delivery service and a mobile. The new library is a £24m project, funded as part of a £40.2m Private Finance Initiative (PFI) involving the building of a new city Library and one small community library at High Heaton. The new City Library opened in June 2009.

The library design brief stressed a number of key principles: visibility; transparency; self-service; making hidden treasures available and creating a building that would 'delight and inspire'. The design brief was established through consultation with a large group of potential stakeholders, identifying the elements of the old library that did not work and research on new libraries in the UK and

abroad. A key driver for the project was to harness the benefits of new technology to improve cost effectiveness and release staff time to engage with users through floor walking.

### Process

Newcastle did not establish a mechanism for working with partners and community representatives on the design of the building and services and did not put in place a plan of community engagement in the same way as libraries in receipt of Big Lottery funding were required to do.

A significant amount of consultation was undertaken with users, non-users, young people etc. The services used a range of consultation tools – questionnaires, focus groups etc. Library staff were consulted regularly during the consultation with staff from all grades and roles involved in the planning and design of the new library and the new ways of working that would be required when open.

### Outcomes

- The new building hosts a range of meeting rooms and public spaces, has a floor area of 8,000 square metres and contains 12 km of shelving
- The library is a very 'green' building and achieves a 'very good' BREEAM rating and has innovative features such as grey recycled water to flush toilets, solar panels on the roof and daylight linked background lighting
- It has quickly established itself as a key city centre destination housing facilities such as a café run by local company Stewart & Co. who specialise in locally sourced food
- The library has acted as a catalyst for change across the whole library service, introducing new ways of working for staff
- Opening hours increased from 60 to 70 hours a week
- Increase in activities for children
- Increased and improved events and activities across all service areas, Heritage, Information and Digital and Adult Reading and Learning
- Increase in partners using the spaces to deliver and promote services
- New services developed in response to volunteers and partners suggestions

### Sustaining and advancing community engagement

Newcastle Libraries has a Customer Service Excellence Award as well as their own customer service quality standards so there is strong focus on good customer service, investment in improving staff skills and evidence that this is the case. A

large number of workshops were held with staff during the design phase to look at what worked and what did not work.

The library is entirely self-service which has changed the relationship that staff have with users. Instead of being behind counters, the staff are now floor-walking and therefore more able to engage actively with users and support them to find the materials or service they require. Staff work more closely with partners who use the building to deliver services.

The library has a programme of ongoing consultation and engagement with users, non-users and partners set out in the corporate Community Engagement Plan.

### Conclusion

The new City Library is a landmark building in the centre of Newcastle, attracting more individual and repeat visits than the old library. The building has been designed so that the activities taking place inside are highly visible with the aim of making people feel more comfortable to enter the building. Counters have been removed and the library is entirely self-service with staff available to support customers on each floor. The library offers a wide range of activities around reading and information – including a significant increase in activities for children and adults which it was not possible to deliver in the old library.

The profile of the library service is higher within the council as the service has used the opportunity of City Library to align itself clearly with key council priorities. In addition, key partners are more confident to use the facilities and the library footfall to meet their objectives.

Whilst not supported by a community engagement plan involving the level of detail in the BIG funded libraries, the design of the library and services was informed by extensive consultation. The high level of consultation with staff which continues has been key to bringing staff forward to share and deliver the vision for the library.

## Appendix 2 – Library Case Studies (intermediate)

Library authority	<b>Bolton – Brieghtmet Community Library</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> This project relocated the library service into a newly constructed building with the Primary Care Resource Centre. Proximity to health / well being and health related services provides an opportunity for cross pollination of services and test innovative service delivery in response to the health needs of the local community.</p>	
<p><b>Setting:</b> BIG funding has meant that a library in poor condition which was a standalone service was able to be relocated to a new location within a health centre next to shopping facilities. As well as capital funding, the revenue funding has greatly assisted with the outreach and marketing to non users.</p> <p>The flexibility of the layout of the new library and it's enhanced facilities has enabled the service to further develop a partnership model with other organisations and promote the volunteer offer leading to community led services with the library acting as a hub and as an enabler for local initiatives.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site which include reading groups, reading promotion, a teen reading group, advice services, summer reading challenge. The community library has a range of additional services:</p> <p><b>Learning and skills</b></p> <p>One of the aims of the projects has been to work with residents and local partners to expand the range of learning opportunities available at the library. A range of ICT and book based learning have been delivered since the library opened. Further courses are planned including family learning, skills for life and community learning programmes.</p> <p><b>Health and wellbeing</b></p> <p>A range of health and well-being sessions are now run at the library community rooms. The co-location of the service with health services and the location of the Age Concern Co-ordinator within the library is helping to develop the building as a community hub.</p>	
<p><b>People &amp; Process</b></p> <p><b>Partnership working:</b> The partnerships developed through the community library programme include local schools and members of the local community. The community rooms in the library section of the building are well used by partners to deliver a range of health, learning and community engagement activities. The area</p>	

has also provided a base for partner activities e.g. Age Concern Befriender Co-ordinator. The neutral nature of the library has facilitated local partners work with hard to reach groups within the library environment.

**Workforce development:** A toolkit developed with funding from the Laser foundation for the consultation programme on the High Street Library development has been used by the Project Co-ordinator to develop staff skills and experience of consultation and engagement techniques. Additional training courses and workshops have been delivered to staff.

**Volunteering:** The volunteering programme at Brightmet includes; a new group of young adults with learning difficulties; a programme of Spanish for the over 50s , card making and a knitting group. A young group of 8 library volunteers meets to develop activities, stock choices and the young people’s area. There is a teen reading programme; Volunteers deliver the summer programme for the library; a number of volunteers are working towards accreditation for AQA reader Development; Establishment volunteer recruitment procedures, linking procedures for young people to the Duke of Edinburgh awards; Community involvement in one off decisions at the library

**Sustaining and advancing:** The library service has merged with the Bolton’s Museum Libraries & Archive, the service therefore benefits from the involvement of a range of additional services and partners.

Library authority	<b>Bucks – Reading and Learning Hub</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> This project provides reading and learning activities at three local libraries; Micklefield (new build), Burnham (refurbish) and Bourne End (extend).</p>	
<p><b>Setting:</b> The programme has created library spaces that bring people together to enjoy and share reading, learning and cultural experiences in a community facility. The project has improved facilities available at all three libraries with new flexible learning and community spaces created with wireless and self service radio frequency identification to support the space and extend public use.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:</p>	
<p><b>Learning and skills:</b> Each is a centre of family learning, children’s activities; library classes and reader development. Also the library acts as the community hub for</p>	

promoting reading and learning through outreach.

**Health and wellbeing:** Sure Start run sessions at all 3 libraries. Each library has a community gardening project.

**People & Process:**

Partnership working: Have developed a wide range of partners across health, learning, education (schools) and local arts organisations. In partnership with other organisations this has expanded the offer available at the libraries.

**Workforce development:** Library managers have taken on community engagement as additional duties. Staff have received a range of training on equality, diversity and customer care. Staff are engaged in much more floor walking due to the installation of self service technology, therefore much more customer interaction. Staff trained to use digital information screens and BCCs FAQ information database. Wider community is accessed through local area forums. Staff trained to deliver community reaching activities; providing information and advice services on learning progression; signpost learners to appropriate services. Staff trained on working with NEET young people, this is an ongoing development programme.

**Volunteering:** Each of the 3 libraries have management groups who have input into the design of the building and the service offer. Each is in the process of forming a Friends Group. Each of the libraries have a wide range of active volunteers involved in the delivering a range of learning, gardening and social activities within the library. Have had difficulty with some volunteers around regular commitments and CRB checks. Have 10 learning champion volunteers. Have 4 teenage champions.

Library authority	<b>Bury - Four Communities @ For Communities</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> Bury identified four areas for the BIG community Library programme.</p> <p>Across the 4 libraries they have created new community centres and libraries; two based on existing community libraries (Moorside and Brandlesholme) and two new ventures (Coronation Road and Dumers Lane).</p> <p>A key feature of the project is the four communities working together, meeting regularly to share experiences and expertise. Communities support each other in practical ways, sharing their time and skills as well as maintaining virtual links through</p>	

the internet.

**Settings:** The project has developed four community centres and libraries.

**Services:** In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:

#### Learning and skills

Brandlesholme: IT Get You Started Courses progressing to on-line courses; China Painting class; basic IT and basic mobile phone week. Weekly craft group involves book inspired projects e.g. Roald Dahl Day and Hands on History (BBC initiative looking at the Normans) had adults and children working together. Supported reading after school – aided by volunteers.

Coronation Road: Get You Started Courses progressing to on-line courses.; 1-1 intensive IT sessions with a member of staff; 6 week Digital Camera course; Online Family history search; basic IT and basic mobile phone week. Reading group and Story Time – Parents and children reading together with a member of staff providing the book and craft materials to create a weekly theme. E.g. Back to school – Book ‘First Day at School’, craft activity – making a school uniform with templates.

Moorside: Get You Started Courses progressing to on-line courses; basic British Sign Language session; Ancestry workshop; Calligraphy; basic IT and basic mobile phone week. ABC (Adults Babies and Children) Group held weekly in partnership with the church has launched its own reading scheme to encourage parents and children to read together. Book based activities run by centre staff every week. New craft group started for 7- 11 years olds with book based themes

Ongoing programme of informal learning via craft and other groups.

#### Health and wellbeing

Brandesholme: Success of the Centre prompted additional funding from Early Years for playgroup and external play area refurbishment.

Dumers Lane: regular use for weekly over 50s sessions; sessions for children and week long healthy living event; Over 50s involved in ongoing healthy living project. With TRA: “health hampers project” provided a health hamper (fruit & veg, sweat bands and pedometers). Bury’s Waste Management Team promoting their “love Bury hate waste campaign”. Healthy eating recipe cards were also distributed through out the day.

Moorside: 20 people attended a six week course on weight management run as part

of the Expert Patient programme. A Well Woman day held in partnership with various council and voluntary agencies attracted over a 100 women of all ages. The Community Walks Programme has also just begun; older people are attending a monthly, fixed price, chiropody treatments and over 30 people a week (the majority over 50) attending a clinic run by the Primary Care Trust.

Coronation Road: Awareness sessions covering council and other associated services including: waste management; policing; housing; keeping safe at home via Carelink (council service to provide alarms for vulnerable people); Council led Carer's Group is meeting in the centre each month to provide information and assistance; Exercise classes funded through a partnership with Sports Development, aimed at 50+; Community Walks Programme organised through Sports Development; planting Project, planting in the community garden. Working in partnership with the Bury Accessible Natural Greenspace Officer to help children and young people realise what lives within the local parks and lodges.

Brandlesholme: The Mobile Gym has continued to grow in success with age-tailored activities. The health trainers have also been attending every other Friday and this is set to increase to a weekly session from October. Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) from the NHS visiting once a month.

### People & Process

#### Partnership working

Coronation Road: Mediation sessions held for the two local TRAs who have a long difficult history. They are working on learning to appreciate and listen to each other leading to a better working relationship.

Dumers Lane: weekly community meetings with housing/police/other advice agencies.

New links in Radcliffe (Coronation and Dumers) to partner with Radcliffe Works to provide training and employment opportunities

- Brandlesholme: Working closely with Six Town Housing to provide further training for Brandlesholme Community Group (TRA) and several committee members are currently being trained in how to write newsletters and publicity articles.

#### Workforce development

Training and mentoring provided for community members in recruitment and selection. Staff attended corporate course; training and support given to community members e.g. mini book selection course, discussions on safety of furnishing, consideration for disabled users etc.; Vulnerable adult training and awareness of disability training given to all tutors. Developing community mentors to support IT

training

Brandlesholme: In partnership with the Residents Association and the TRA a 'Big Lunch' was organised in the park at the back of the centre. Council departments and Team Bury partners were present to raise awareness about council services. Following on from this council officers and councillors are invited and encouraged to attend community meetings being held in the centre.

3 of 4 Community Development Officers are (4th resigned for personal reasons) working closely with community partners and other community groups and agencies in their own communities and encouraging cross working between the 4 BLF locations. Four Community Information Assistants are also in post, supporting this work.

Staff have attended a wide range of training courses including: - Meaningful Participation Strategy; Involving Young Volunteers; Adult Advancement Network; V3 Front Office training; ECDL; Common assessment framework; Housing overview training; AWARD training (affordable warmth); Hearing impairment and Visual impairment awareness; Workplace risk assessment competency training; Handling anti-social behaviour at work; Early Break – Tier 1 (Alcohol abuse); Premises hazards; Leadership; Fire marshal training; Equality and Diversity; Managing stress; Gypsy, Roma traveller event; How to talk to young people about sex (sexual health awareness); Domestic violence awareness.

### Volunteering

48 people involved in the Steering Groups for the project and they have formed the basis of the Community Partnerships. Local TRAs all offered training provision.

Brandesholme: New Team of volunteers bringing new skills and experience. 3 weekly library assistants, others leading specific classes - crafts, knitting and reading, others supporting weekly children's crafts and homework clubs.

Coronation Road: 3 new volunteers working on library related activities. In addition a volunteer has been leading a digital camera course, another has set up a craft group, another a knitting group and yet another a storytelling group. A young people's panel is established at Coronation Road and links made to the Youth Parliament

Moorside: 2 new volunteers working on library related activities and now has volunteer led craft and knitting groups and a programme of volunteer led coffee and activity mornings.

Dumers Lane: a team of volunteers are running activities for over 50s in the centre

and are also involved in community projects e..g the healthy living project.

Taken on 8 young people as Community Library Assistants funded by the Future Jobs Fund. Each trainee is place for six months; two have now finished the scheme with one gaining a place at University and one getting a job.

Members of both the Steering Groups and Partnerships are being actively encouraged to take part in wider community/neighbourhood management initiatives e.g. Local Area Partnerships

Moorside: Due to success of the Centre, previous opponents to the scheme now on the Community Partnership Board

### Sustaining and advancing

- Steering Groups and Partnerships setup to run beyond the life of the programme.
- The 50+ groups at Coronation Road and Dumers Lane are using the building and acting independently – they have the confidence (and we have the confidence in them) to secure the building. This is emblematic of the project – local people having control of their building.
- Community surveys for children done at all centres – overwhelmingly positive feedback – 150 surveys returned plus over 100 instant response smiley face feedbacks. Programme of school assembly visits continuing. Youth inclusion starting children groups aimed at all age ranges which have helped bridge the gap between the gaps within opportunities for children specifically between the age of 6-12 left by limitations of other services.

Library authority	<b>Derby – Project LiRA</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> Construction of three libraries, each within Derby's Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. 3 areas were previously served by a mobile library service. The project aims to provide: learning activities in partnership with the adult learning service; extend hours considerably and family learning</p>	
<p><b>Settings :</b>For each of the three library sites the settings now include the full range of library services; community / learning rooms for use by partners and delivery of learning and reading activities; office space for partner presence e.g. Derby Homes; local police service; and appropriate domestic facilities e.g. public toilets.</p>	

**Services:** All three libraries offer the full range of library services including books, periodicals, free public Internet, CDs and DVDs. In addition a Museum showcase offers themed taster displays of museum objects, curated by museums service staff.

**Learning and skills** - The learning programme within each library is developed in conjunction with the library panels. A range of services to support literacy and learning is also offered, for example: (for children and young people) Bookstart, the annual Summer Reading Challenge, weekly Rhyme Times, school visits; (for adults) job seekers workshops, citizenship events, book clubs, Internet courses, family and local history courses, craft groups; (for all ages) Museum workshops, family events.

A range of learning, skills and employment related activities are available within each of the three libraries including: Registered UK on-line centre; Internet Taster sessions; Youth group Enthusiasm have attended a programme of job seeker workshops; Library garden which runs activities for both adults and children; programme of job Seekers workshops; 'out of school' homework and study support activities; a range of activities including kit and natter, craft and char and a book club

### **People & Process**

#### **Partnership working**

Wide range of partners working with and in the libraries including health care workers, police, learning and skills provides; youth organisations; schools; sure start and the probation service.

Team meeting are used to continually update on partner activities and services, partners invited to attend all team meetings.

Partnership arrangements form part of the library annual service business plan.

#### **Workforce development**

Staff have received on and off the job training in working within the new library environment, this includes working with volunteers, partners and the library panels.

Senior manager are continuing to work with panels as part of the decision making process for service delivery within each of the libraries.

#### **Volunteering**

Each of the libraries have active panels, each have voted on becoming constituted groups and thereby budget holders. Each of the 3 Panels voted 'not' to be constituted.

Framework agreements are being developed for each Panel.

Panels have completed funding applications and been successful in securing small (£1,000) grants for activities within the library e.g. community garden project.

Volunteers involved in developing and delivery a wide range of activities within the libraries

Case study: 2 volunteers – 1 volunteer gained employment as a Library Assistant at Allerton library; 2<sup>nd</sup> volunteer, who worked with the support of Mencap had built up sufficient confidence to start a course with Adult Learning Services.

Library Staff are currently working on improved task descriptions for volunteers. New processes and procedures to be implement in Spring 2011.

#### **Sustaining and advancing**

- The Big funding provided capital funding to build the libraries and stimulated a new approach to community engagement within the service.
- Community Engagement element of the BIG library programme in Derby is to be evaluated by LISU during 2011.
- Library Panels are represented on the Project Management Board and fully participate in the decision making processes for libraries.
- Through the Panels there is a greater understanding of the needs and wishes of the local communities.
- Intention to develop community engagement across the other neighbourhood and Central Libraries through setting up library panels and maintaining / increasing the level of volunteer activity.

Library authority

**Gateshead – Central Library: Community hub for a space for life**

**Brief Description:** The project has extended and refurbished the older part of the building, which now houses the lending library, children's library and audio library.

**Settings:** The new space has been extended for family learning, reading activities for adults and children; healthy eating courses and health checks. . It provides a larger children's library and a teenage library "chill out space", study facilities, music composition software and a coffee machine. Space for community groups to meet and quiet areas for relaxation and reading; improved accessibility, layout and design

of the library.

**Services:** In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:

**Learning and skills:** Range of learning, skills and education courses delivered at the library; a teen reading group who were involved in the design of the new teen space; Library DJ workshop; 'Gateshead unplugged' based on the Get it Loud in Libraries programmes; taster programmes including a family ESOL; Creative writing; Lifelong learning taster courses; Indian Head Massage; Holiday Spanish; Digital photography; Tyneside Women's Readers Group; Deaf Women's Reading Group; Central Library Readers Group; Gateshead Local History Society; Recorded Music Society

**Health and wellbeing:** A full Health Impact Assessment was conducted on the new library scheme. In addition there are a number of health and well being activities in the library including: Health Checks; Books on Prescription - supported by self help; Take control session/stress busters. The library has also established a Health Improvement sub group of project management board. The sub-group includes the following bodies: Community Health Team; Health Trainers; Healthy community collaborative; North East Council for Addictions; Gateshead Alzheimer's; MIND Resident of the local area

**People & Process:**

**Partnership working:** A range of learning; education and health partners are working within the library. Partnerships have been established and strengthened with a broad range of organisations including local schools, health providers, adult education providers and third sector organisations. The Friends group are working with Gateshead community Network to carry out customer consultation to find out what activities should be available in the community rooms.

**Workforce development**

2 community Engagement workers appointed to the programme.

Staff attended a range of short courses including community engagement training including the BIG community Engagement Workshop; a visit to Southbank Library for ideas on positive engagement and LiC programme of accreditation.

**Volunteering**

The Friends Group which has 2 sub groups identify the programme of learning activities for the library. Members of the friends group regularly review activities and consult with customers about the library service and activities; GCN asked to train

Friends in developing and delivering customer surveys.

**Sustaining and advancing**

- Establishment of a Friends Group.
- Information Services team who have permanent responsibility for overseeing health and learning activities.
- Use of Community champions to promote activities and recruit volunteers.
- Ongoing evaluation of health improvement.

Library authority

**London Borough of Enfield – John Jackson Library**

**Brief Description:** Development and expansion of John Jackson library in the Bush Hill area of the borough.

Project tested different / alternative approaches to provision; volunteer engagement; education and learning activities

**Settings:** The new space houses meeting rooms, study areas, toilets and baby changing facilities, a music production suite and a kitchen.

**Services**

**Learning & Skills:** In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:

All activities for 0-13 year olds are new to the library. The weekly Baby Rhyme Time, Under-5s story time & play sessions and Makaton; Homework Centre; monthly Chatterbooks (Reading group for 8-13s) sessions; a programme of Babies & Books; ‘Supersenses’ an activity using multi sensory stories and craft activities for children with Learning difficulties and sensory impairments; ‘Stars & Stuff’ which was a craft activity based on the Summer Reading Challenge theme of Space; National Summer Reading challenge;

The DJ academy, a local accredited music course, young people attending have started to work towards accreditation; a Music Tutor from Enfield Youth Services and library staff have attended the Creative Workshop training with musical experience to develop in house sessions.

Intergenerational IT classes with 8 over 50s; in partnership with both AgeUK and Enfield homes IT skills of local older people; hosted Adult Learning Week; IT

supported sessions and an oral history project looking at the local area in the Second World War.

## People & Process:

### Partnership working

Range of new partners engaged including the local Mosque. Approach to have a named link person for partner so that relationships can be developed and working practices can be developed with partners.

Strengthened links with existing partners

Also project has been used to raise the profile of the library service across the borough with internal council partners.

### Workforce development

The role of staff within the John Jackson library has changed during the life of the project. Role descriptions and job titles have altered to recognise the changing role of staff; recruitment & supervision of volunteers is now integral job requirements

### Volunteering

Range of advisory boards whose members are volunteers, adult advisory board; children's advisory board; 12-17 advisory board.

A number of volunteers working within the library do not live in the immediate vicinity as have not been able to recruit volunteers from this area (culture of wanting / needing paid employment).

Summer Reading programme run through Age concern volunteer, very successful so now being rolled out across the library service. Volunteer processes within LB Enfield developed during the life of the project (across Council).

## Sustaining and advancing

- New approaches tested through the BIG project are now to be rolled out across the service.
- Library service to be located within the Regeneration team of the local authority, potential for the service to broaden the reach of the service and be a conduit for engagement across many functions within the geographical area for local authority, health and other public service organisations.

Library authority	<b>London Borough of Sutton – The Circle Library</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> A new 2-storey library and community centre built in Middleton Circle in order to provide a high quality, eco-friendly and accessible landmark building.</p> <p>The new library creates a social and educational space designed to reflect the needs and aspirations of local people and provides something the area has needed for many years.</p>	
<p><b>Settings :</b>The new building has a traditional library, compact digital studio facilities, an IT centre for public use and training, Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) self service borrowing, a readers lounge, health information and promotion and Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) facilities. Community space on the first floor is available for training, events, meetings, children's parties, performances and advice sessions, both during library hours and in the evenings.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:</p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills:</b> Learning &amp; Skills activities have focussed on engaging and working with children and young people.</p> <p><b>Health &amp; Well-being:</b> Health Lifestyle initiatives e.g. exercise classes have been introduced within the library.</p>	
<p><b>People &amp; Process:</b></p> <p><b>Partnership working</b> A number of existing partnerships continue to feed into the work at the library. The library staff have established new partners with whom they continue to work e.g. invited to attend the Business &amp; Engagement Forum. Through existing partnership arrangements the Library has been awarded £38K from Heritage Lottery fund to set up and run a oral history project about the St. Helier Estate where the library is based.</p> <p><b>Workforce development</b> Staff attended a range of short courses including community engagement training to support this BIG project. On-going workforce development will continue through the Library workforce development programme.</p> <p><b>Volunteering</b></p>	

A Library Steering group of volunteer representative has been formed and meet regularly to discuss and give feedback on all aspects of the new library. Steering group members have visited other new libraries and exhibitions to get ideas. Strategic Partnership project board included community Steering group representative, discussing design and making key decisions on the building. Focus groups held with teenagers and unemployed people – feedback was fed into the design and event programmes. Community Rep attends the City Library Partnership Board meetings.

Library authority	<b>Leicester – New Parks Library &amp; Community Learning Centre</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> The new facility is a community hub, bringing together residents, voluntary and community groups, advisory agencies and education and arts providers, and involving local people in regenerating their community.</p>	
<p><b>Settings :</b> A new building fit for community learning now and in the future, incorporating a library, community cafe, flexible community spaces and advanced library technology. The centre is located in the heart of the community near shops, local housing and bus stops.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:</p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills</b> A programme of Learning &amp; Skills have been delivered at the library which includes: taster sessions developed by Adult Learning Zone Co-ordinator; UK online services; assistance for IT beginners and UK only Buddy volunteers to assist individuals; the library operates as a ‘spoke’ for the Multi Access Centre and Mac staff provide specialist learning sessions to up skill local unemployment adults; regular activities include: study support every Wednesday evening during term time; Toddler Time session; Wotbox – junior community reporting club; Music rooms session for young adults.</p> <p><b>Health &amp; Well-being</b> The Health &amp; wellbeing sessions run at the library include: Health &amp; Fitness taster sessions as part of the adult children and family monthly activity programme; Stop Smoking Sessions; Nutrition and dance; Cook &amp; Eat Session for mother and toddlers; cook with Confidence practical cookery classes; Walking group; Wii games – part of the New Parks Easter Olympics Programme. Leicester NHS to promote health Living activities at the library.</p>	

## People & Process:

### Partnership working

The Library Management Steering Committee started operations in May 2010. The re-organised group includes; 6 adults local residents; 3 younger local residents; Performance & project manager; Community Libraries Manager; Volunteer & Skills Development Worker; Senior Librarian; Cafe Manager. The Library Management Team are currently exploring the possibility of holding a small annual budget on behalf of the group, who would decide how the funds are spent to best further the aims of the project.

The BIG Project manager and Libraries Manager have worked with local partners and stakeholders to gain commitment and resources for the programme of information learning activities at the Library. Key partners include City Multi Access Centre (MAC; New Parks Adult Learning Zone Co-ordinator; Health partners.

In addition, partnerships within the Local Authority have enabled the library to secure funding from Extended Services to commission Soft Touch to train adult Volunteers to help young people to use the music recording studio.

### Workforce development

2 Big lottery funded posts were created to support the development and delivery of the project. Additional posts of volunteer and skills development worker and cafe manager have been created as part of the project development.

A programme of workforce development has been delivered including: support from the Volunteer and Skills Development Worker: PRINCE2 training; induction into the capital delivery process; report writing and presentations; effective community engagement and on 'inspiring Learning for all' evaluation techniques.

Individual staff members have received individual training to meet local need e.g. library staff have received training on content of information learning programmes from VSDW and MAC staff.

### Volunteering

There are a number of active volunteers at the library. A generic volunteer framework was developed prior to the appointment of the volunteer and skills development worker who subsequently drew up project specific volunteer

The Volunteer and Skills Development Manager has been responsible for defining the roles for the local library and project. Volunteers registered interest in the roles developed including: volunteer led walking group; volunteer assisted knitter natter

group; volunteer assisted craft Eco group. In addition a self organised mutually supported child minding group is facilitated, it provides routes into child minding as a profession and is run on a completely voluntary basis.

Steering Group & Young people panel received inductions. Residents participated in a live radio broadcast & stakeholder visits.

Panel Members have worked on 3 strands of projects: Promotional Activities; Resources – book stock and IT equipment; Activities – what young people want to do in the library.

Volunteers received guidance on monitoring activities as standard volunteer induction delivery by VSDW from April 2010 onwards.

Library authority	<b>Liverpool City Council – Toxteth Community Library</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> The project has redesigned and reinvigorated the existing Toxteth Library to establish it as an innovative community led learning and information hub for the well being of a culturally and socially diverse community.</p>	
<p><b>Settings :</b>The new library houses study areas, meeting rooms, exhibition space, community space, toilets, baby changing facilities, refreshment area and a performance space.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b></p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services: The programme at Toxteth has been developed in response to the mapping of reading and literacy needs in the Toxteth area. Big lottery funding was used to appoint a reading outreach worker with additional funding secured from the Neighbourhood Management Team to employ a second reading outreach worker to continue the mapping work. The worker is helping to establish more reading groups and will support staff with further needs mapping, training for volunteers, the collation of statistics and writing case studies to show outcomes using MLA Generic Social&amp; Learning outcomes.</p> <p>10 reading groups in the library including reading groups for people with mental health difficulties, asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>In addition the library hosts weekly IT literacy sessions; British Citizenship</p>	

Ceremonies.

**Health & Well-being:** The Liverpool Libraries Lifelong Learning Manager is the head for health issues in Liverpool Libraries - instigated a training programme for staff and partners, and prioritises Toxteth staff. A Health Deliver Plan and a remit for the Health Outreach Worker has been worked up with delivery partners and with input from the Toxteth Library Steering Group (TLCSG). Activities to support health and well-being include drop-in advice sessions for people with mental health difficulties - emphasis on non-English speaking local people; Refugee Action set up weekly walks around Toxteth for newly arrived asylum seekers - calls in to library and they are encouraged to use free library facilities/ services.

A number of key partners are working within the library setting offering information and activities, these include

- Local Health Centre - sessions for improving mental health;
- NHS/PCT – Fag Ends smoking cessation sessions and well Read collections;
- Reader organisation – pleasure reading for improving health / reducing stress;
- Local parent volunteer to run support parents with disabled or ill children;
- Quiet reading and contemplative zone to enable customers to relax;
- Age concern to offer sessions for older people;
- Caribbean Centre to offer health sessions to Elders and younger people;
- Windsor House Mental health) reading group now established.

**People & Process:**

**Partnership working**

Toxteth Library staff have continued to host and attend networking meetings in the area including Neighbourhood Management Meetings, the Personal and Community Development Learning Network, BME Foster Carers Group and the Community Engagement Workers Forum.

Building on a successful pilot in 2009 Refugee Action have now established weekly walks for the newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees calling in at Toxteth Library. Each group consists of about 12-15 refugees and asylum seekers. Refugee Action will produce a report on this initiative and share with Liverpool Libraries, Big Lottery

and the MLA.

Key delivery partners now include:

- Refugee Action (Refugee community walks and conversation clubs)
- The Reader Organisation (reading outreach work and reading sessions)
- Liverpool Adult Learning Service (Literacy skills)
- Liverpool Community College (Literacy skills)
- Liverpool Supplementary School (study support for young people)
- Arts in Regeneration (creative community engagement activities)
- Citizen's On-line (Everybody's Online project)
- Connect to Libraries (Introduction to computing and beyond)
- Granby and Toxteth Children's Centre – (early years sessions)
- Liverpool City Council Foster Care Team – (training for BME foster carers)

**Workforce development:** Staff development includes library staff meeting tutors and attending adult learning sessions both to improve the skills and knowledge of staff but also to gain a better appreciation of the value and nature of this work when discussing opportunities with customers. Staff attend community meetings to understand local issues and needs and to promote library. In addition staff are being trained on the latest on-line resources available for supporting healthy living and making health related choices.

**Volunteering:** The Toxteth Library Community Steering Group first met in October 2009 and agreed to meet at six weekly intervals with sub-groups forming to take priority work forward in between meetings. This has worked well with 12 core members able to divide up the priorities and meet outside of the TLCSG meetings and progress priorities with support from Toxteth Library staff as appropriate. It was agreed that the TLCSG would be open and allow membership to expand if new people wished to come along and get involved. This approach has helped to ensure that the group is not seen as closed or elitist group and helps with local community politics.

A number of suitable volunteers have now been identified through the 10 reading groups, these volunteers are to be supported by a package of training to support them to deliver reading groups on their own. This includes certified training.

The library has 10 local community learning volunteers. Through additional funding secured via the Personal and Community Development Learning Group, there is a

further programme to recruit learning volunteers. Toxteth library has been identified as a suitable venue for the PCDL Learning volunteers to gain experience and help to deliver sessions.

Three members of the Toxteth library community Steering Group are active with elders in the BME community and are helping to identify socially isolated older BME people. This has been very successful with community leaders from the Arabic and Yemeni Association, Chinese Elders Society, Malaysian and Singapore Association all hosting and supporting activities for older people.

Library authority	<b>Luton – Luton Central Library &amp; Learning Centre</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> This project has revitalised Luton Central Library, creating a modern, attractive library and learning centre, where all the community feel welcome and where a wide variety of learning opportunities are available.</p>	
<p><b>Settings:</b> The project has created three clearly identified learning zones to facilitate learning and add to the learning experience through the creation of a dedicated area for babies and toddlers for the first time, create separate and clearly defined areas for older or visually impaired customers and improve the appearance of the building.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:</p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills:</b> a range of learning and skills programmes which include: ‘My Voice’ project; Author events; ESOL maths and IT skills; Internet taster courses in the Visually Impaired area; a reading group for visually impaired users.</p> <p><b>Health &amp; Well-being:</b> Health information point established in the library; Books on prescription at local health &amp; GP centres; migrant specific activities to establish and maintain networks for both providers and individuals.</p>	
<p><b>People &amp; Process:</b></p> <p><b>Partnership working:</b> Luton Library has become part of the Luton Cultural Services Trust, with a board of community, council and employee representatives, with the responsibility for management of the service. The partnership works with a range of local partners including : VIP – sight concern; Exchange Group Ltd; Learn Direct; Cruse Bereavement group;</p>	

Luton Law Centre; and partners across the statutory sector.

**Workforce development:** Workforce development at the library is supported through participation of the employee representative as part of the Library Trust Board; Participation of senior supervisors as volunteer supervisors; and individual training courses in response to identified need e.g. one admin assistant at the library has achieved an NVQ level 3 in Business Admin during the programme.

**Volunteering:** The Trust has experienced difficulty recruiting local community representatives as board members. There are 10 volunteers, 5 of whom work on the IT taster training courses, 4 fill shelves and 1 is helping at the Bookstart project.

A formal Volunteers policy is under development and in conjunction with senior supervisors.

Library Advisory panels have not been successful and therefore have been abandoned.

Using CIPFA survey data to recruit customers who have expressed an interest in working more closely with the library service to generate future Library Advisory Panels (LAPs) activity.

**Sustaining and advancing**

- Luton Library has become part of the Luton Cultural Services Trust, with a trust board of community, council and employee representatives directly managing the library service.
- Volunteer policy is under development senior supervisors involved in the volunteer programme. Induction training has been provided for all board members.

Library authority	<b>North Somerset – For All Healthy Living Centre Community Library</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> The project has created a community library, by bringing the Little Library, Centre Library and mobile library service together in one space.</p> <p>The project has been developed by, and will be managed by, North Somerset Council in partnership with the For All Healthy Living Company – a vibrant, well- established voluntary and community sector organisation that is rooted in the local community</p>	

and has a sound track record of successful community engagement.

**Settings :** The For All Health Living Centre (FAHLC) includes a health centre, community hall, day centre, Church, children's centre facilities and community cafe. The library hall has been well received by residents and there is demand from the community for an extended service.

**Services:** In addition to the core library services delivered on site the community library has a range of additional services:

**Learning & Skills:** A range of activities for children and young people including: story time activities with the South Weston Children's Centre and 4 local schools and Rhyme time.

**Health & Well-being:** The library is located with a healthy living centre and therefore offers a range of health programmes which include: books on prescription and Beating the Blues (CBT self led computer programme)

FAHLC are developing a Positive Well-being project aimed at providing support, information and activities for people suffering from low level mental health issues and anxiety. This has led to direct referrals to a reading group and the setting up of a social prescription project.

The Community Engagement worker set up a referral only reading group for people experiencing social isolation and low level anxiety.

Social Prescribing – FAHLC has entered into partnership with the local primary mental health service to pilot a new social prescription service. GPs will issue a prescription to the service and one of the options will be for the worker to refer to the library.

**People & Process:**

**Partnership working**

The lead librarian at FAHLC has met with the project co-ordinator of the Positive Well-being project and the mental health worker from the North Somerset Council children's centre to order appropriate 'books on prescription' and additional self help books. This has been a very successful partnership.

Working with Barnardo's, Behaviour Improvement Plan team and the police, to encourage young people to use the facility in appropriate ways. Some of these young

people are at risk and in children protection circumstances.

FAHLC staff and library staff have worked together to identify workers and organisations to deliver activities through the library. These include: the GP practice on site; Positive Well-being project team; Children's Centre team; Health trainers employed by the PCT; Barnardos; North Somerset Council Youth Workers.

Workforce development: A Community Engagement Worker was appointed. In addition library staff have worked with Children's Centre staff to increase their knowledge and experience of working with children.

Librarian attends and contributes to all steering groups meetings (80% attendance so far) developing consultation experience & mechanisms through this forum.

The librarian and library assistants worked with FAHLC on promotion of the library and new activities. They consulted regarding what worked e.g. when the take up to story time was low, the programme was reviewed and adjusted to rhyme time.

**Volunteering:** As a third sector organisation the organisation has implemented North Somerset volunteer policy and procedures. The library is working with the FAHLC's Volunteer Co-ordinator to recruit and train local people as volunteers which has included : an 8 week community research skills course for volunteers supported by LAHLC's Community Development Workers: Monitoring and evaluation skills training for volunteers: trained and have increased experience of working with children & young people:

The project manager worked with the original steering group on consultation skills, including the ability to listen actively, ask open questions and have the confidence to represent views.

FAHLC's community engagement worker and project manager supported the steering groups members in talking to the community and promoting new services. In total, 14 young people have attended at least one steering group meeting. They worked with the project manager and library staff to talk about the type of services they would like to see in the library.

**Sustaining and advancing:**

- Run as a social enterprise as part of the Health Living Centre
- Friends of the Library Group is being formed, the role of the group will be shaped by the members. Members have been recruited from the steering

group plus new members.

Library authority	<b>Northumberland – Library &amp; Community Resource Centre</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> The project aims to refurbish the former Haltwhistle Mechanics Institute.</p> <p>The new library will be a modern Library and Community Resource Centre/ Hub for the benefit of Haltwhistle and the surrounding area, addressing social and economic inclusion.</p>	
<p><b>Settings :</b> The new library is a modern Library and Community Resource Centre/ Hub. The facilities include: improved community facilities, provision of additional floor space for quiet study space, office accommodation, hot desk facilities, meeting and activity rooms and spaces.</p> <p>The new library facility provides a range of learning activities that meet the needs of the local community. These include adult education, Skills for Life, leisure activities, arts and crafts and ICT courses</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> In addition to the core library services delivered on site. The Community Library has a range of additional services:</p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills</b> The Adult Learning offer is fully operational and includes adult education, Skills for Life, leisure activities, arts and crafts and ICT courses.</p>	
<p><b>People &amp; Process:</b></p> <p><b>Partnership working</b> The Project Steering Group has been drawn from Northumberland City Council, Haltwhistle Partnership and local representatives. There are currently 5 Community groups working with the library who have reported improved access to support, advice and information since the new community Library facility opened.</p> <p>The partnership between Adult Learning and the library is contributing to an improvement to the skills across the community. This Partnership offers the opportunity to learn and improve skills such as return to work skills. Bringing together the library and Adult Learning in the first instance is a major starting point. With the Town Council, Tourist Information Centre, Milecastle Housing considering being part of the building and support of the Haltwhistle Partnership and the community, this</p>	

building will be the central focus point of Haltwhistle.

**Workforce development**

Two Members of staff from the Library Service attended the MLA Community Engagement Training in Leeds.

**Volunteering**

The Northumberland City Council Youth Cabinet designed the young people's areas within the Community Library.

Library authority	<b>North Tyneside Council – Books &amp; People @ Howdon Library</b>
<p><b>Brief Description:</b> This project provides a new building, replacing the existing outdated library, giving more space for activities, offering wider access, and making use of the site's garden for the first time. The new library is complemented by a mobile facility that provides an outreach service to key sites to target provision at hard-to-reach groups.</p>	
<p><b>Settings:</b> The new library provides a range of services in a modern setting that is flexible enough to host a wide range of activities; Integrated activity space that can be used for a range of events and activities for family learning, and adults and children; a facility for an occasional crèche and access for community events out of library opening hours; Toilets (including disabled and baby-change); Refreshment facilities; Access to garden and outdoor under-5s play area.</p>	
<p><b>Services:</b> A full range of branch library facilities including the loan of adult and children's books, Large Print and Spoken Word, audio-visual materials, newspapers and magazines, local studies information, and free access to Peoples' Network PCs and the Internet. The mobile library for children and families provides: A range of books and other resources for children and families; Access to People's Network PCs and the Internet; Facilities to hold activities / information sessions.</p> <p><b>Learning &amp; Skills</b> Sessions include: Bounce &amp; rhyme sessions; Toddler Tales; Board Games club; Word cup activities; Summer reading challenge activities 2010/2011; A range of activities around the World cup 2010; Mobile library service visits have been offered to all schools, within the areas of high deprivation and / or geography distant from the</p>	

static service point. The mobile is running at 95% capacity during term time.

- Community groups, volunteers and partners agree new services to be delivered from the mobile library.
- Programme of visits and activities developed for next two years. December 20011-12 On track to achieve this following very successful initial 18 months of operation

### Health & Well-being

Initial work to target hard to reach groups has commenced with the use of the new children's mobile. The mobile has been well received by children and their carers living in more isolated and /or deprived areas of the borough and has encouraged take up of library membership and the Summer Reading Challenge.

Innovative services and activities are being developed to engage members of the community who would not normally use a more traditional library service.

### People & Process:

**Partnership working:** Programme of regular Steering Group Meetings established to steer the project: Sub-groups established from members of the community to undertake responsibilities for monitoring and delivery of building / library services, mobile library services and family learning activities programme. Partners include: Adult Learning alliance; PCT; North Tyneside community Network; Churchill community College; Community Police team; a 5-year sustainability plan for community involvement beyond October 2011 is currently under development.

**Workforce development :** a programme of workforce development has been implemented within the Community Library project which has included:

- The South West Area libraries manager, working directly with the Youth Advisory Group, will be involved in the borough wide consultation programme.
- A Children and Young Peoples librarian has acted as contact and supervisor for the young volunteers.
- Library staff helped train 2 students to act as tour guides on the opening.
- The Serving Communities Delivery Team re-structure created the necessary Senior Library Assistant and Operation Manager post to increase the opening hours at Howdon Library to full time and to provide dedicated staffing for the new children's mobile library.

- A member of the Communications Unit worked proactively with library staff to produce an effective publicity plan for the opening of the library & launch of the mobile library.
- Library staff undertook regional Ember vision training and display concepts have been introduced through the library, which has directly contributed to the increase in book loans.
- Library staff have received additional training in community information e.g. Homefinders scheme has been successfully piloted.

### Volunteering

- The libraries Children and Young People's team (CYP) are actively working with the Extended Schools team to establish a timetable of volunteering activities. A steering group comprising local residents, ward councillors and representatives from local organisations has been established to support and direct the development of the library.
- The volunteers training programme is being developed.
- The volunteers helped to design and produce a community newsletter.
- The community steering group and involvement of students from Churchill College is 'forging the foundations' for sustainable community involvement in helping to deliver the Howdon Library Books and People project.
- 2 task force groups (children's activities and family learning groups) were established at the community libraries road show.
- Volunteers to be used to deliver the Summer Reading Challenge 2011.
- A volunteer has offered to maintain the community garden at the library.

### Sustaining and advancing

- The Library Service has been integrated into the wider Serving Communities Delivery Team (encompassing libraries, customer services, community centres, tourist information centres)
- Programme of visits and activities developed for next two years. December 2011-12 On track to achieve this following very successful initial 18 months of operation
- 5-year sustainability plan for community involvement beyond October 2011 produced. To be produced by July 2011

Library authority	<b>Wolverhampton – Wednesfield Community Library</b>
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**Brief Description:** The library has replaced the existing library in Wednesfield with a vibrant new building.

**Settings:** The new building houses meeting rooms and flexible spaces, which can adapt to the diverse needs of the community. In addition, the new building houses Wednesfield Community Centre which provides a range of social, leisure and learning facilities.

**Services:** The services available within the Community Library building include a range of I.T., educational; skills courses; social community groups e.g. Asian Ladies & Gents social groups; and physical activities e.g. Keep fit and Table Tennis.

**Learning & Skills:** The library offers a wide range of activities for children, families and adults in the community. These range from education activities e.g. reading groups, physical activities to formal learning.

#### Health & Well-being

Wednesfield Community Centre provides a range of social, leisure and learning sessions that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community. As well as offering information via books and other resources on health and well being topics, the library service also runs, in partnership with other agencies, various help and advice sessions such as first aid courses, debt advice and unemployment surgeries etc.

#### People & Process:

**Partnership working:** Engagement with users, partners and local community has continued to take place. Partners who reside in the library building have met to discuss both operational and building issues. A service level agreement has been drawn up and signed by all partners involved.

A number of focus group have been established which include representation from local groups, religious organisations, business and community groups. They have helped to define the requirements of the building and help shape the delivery and development of the service.

The Management Committee includes members from the library and community centre who will meet regularly outside committee meetings to monitor activities in both organisations to avoid duplication and exchange services and space where required.

#### Workforce development

Staff are regularly consulted and updated on the development of the library. A session with the professional facilitator is planned to help staff review and assess changes made and their impact on the community.

Development plans for all staff have been produced and additional training is currently being sought where appropriate. Some of the sessions identified will be sourced in house via the city Council's workforce Development Team.

Branch Librarian attends West Midlands network meetings where information and best practice with regard community engagement is discussed and then disseminated to other staff as appropriate.

The Ethnic Services Librarian has met with the Branch Librarian to discuss library provision and possible training initiatives.

Volunteering: The management board is made up of representatives from Wednesfield Community Association, mother & toddlers group, Wednesfield & Fallings Park Neighbourhood partnership, local temple, local learning forum, local businesses, library members and staff is in place. During the development of this project, a number of focus groups were established which include representation for local groups, religious organisations, businesses and community groups. The librarian will continue to meet with these groups in order to help to shape and develop the services offered.

A generic branch library plan has been produced for 2010/11 and has been shared with the Wednesfield Management Board. The management board will have more involvement with this process (monitoring) and ultimately become responsible for monitoring progress made.

The management board is in place and meets 4 times per year. A chair, vice chair and secretary have been appointed and a constitution and vision statement have been produced. The local neighbourhood partnership has met with them to discuss duties of responsibilities associated with their position and they are now much more comfortable and confident in these roles. Other group members are or have been members of other boards within their organisation or community. As of yet, no other additional skills have been identified, however, the Local Learning Forum co-ordinator (who is a member of the board) will assist in sourcing relevant training as and when required.

4 volunteers from the volunteer reading scheme helped to deliver the summer reading challenge this summer. This small pilot has helped to shape working

agreements and practices for future volunteer involvement.

#### Sustaining and advancing

- The Management Committee members include representatives from the Library service, Community Association, community groups, and library users and focus groups, who meet regularly to monitor progress of the community library and develop ideas on resources and activities. In addition the library staff and CA representatives meet to ensure there is no unnecessary duplication of activities, and there is a cross-over of information on courses and space availability, including computer usage.
- The library service is also working towards becoming a UK online NES Centre (N'hood Employment and Skill Centre). Library staff will be trained to IAG level 3 and offer advice surgeries at specific times each week.

## Appendix 3 – Project Case Studies and Social Return on Investment

### Introduction

The evaluation report of June 2010 used the methodology of social return on investment (SROI) to add to the understanding of what the work of libraries was delivering in a wider sense.

SROI is a measurement tool that builds upon more traditional cost-benefit analysis approaches to capture the economic value of social, environmental and economic costs and benefits, and to do so in a collaborative way with stakeholders and participants of the intervention in question.

The aim of the approach is to understand the full and true costs of an intervention, and to place that in a ratio against the full and true value of an intervention. The results will be a ratio, such as 1:2. This would suggest that for every £1 of investment, an intervention creates £2 of value.

As stated by the Cabinet Office ‘SROI is about value, rather than money’ and the financial units are used as a common unit and a way of conveying value. What is also important to state, however, is that SROI is designed to be ‘more than just a number. It is a story about change on which to base decisions, that includes case studies and qualitative, quantitative and financial information.’<sup>53</sup>

The process of completing an SROI assessment includes five main stages. In each of the examples within this appendix, the process of completion will be described, with a complete impact map at the end. The stages are:

- Establishing scope and identifying stakeholders
- Mapping outcomes
- Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value
- Establishing impact
- Calculating the SROI

As this study is building on the findings of a previous evaluation, it is important to first look at the findings and issues highlighted by that study.

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<sup>53</sup> *A guide to Social Return on Investment, Cabinet Office, May 2009, p.8.*

### Previous evaluation

The June 2010 completed two SROI assessments across the five ‘intensive’ libraries that were worked with. These were the Homework Club in Nottingham, and the Make Friends with a Book reading group in Sandwell.

This study noted the following challenges and difficulties that were encountered, both from a practical and methodological perspective, in delivering SROI assessments:

- The inexperience of many staff and group leaders in gathering evidence of outcomes and impacts meant that the concept of SROI was difficult to comprehend and engage with
- Attempts to attribute monetary values to some outcomes and impacts (for example, increased self-esteem,) were considered by library staff and users to be particularly challenging.
- The timescales and resources available meant that the SROI expert on the evaluation Advisory Group was of the opinion that a full and rigorous SROI assessment could not be carried out given the short timescale between community engagement activities being undertaken and the end of the study period
- The sensitivities of conducting meaningful and detailed consultations with beneficiaries such as young children and people with mental health issues were also highlighted in terms of completing a study that is designed to be open and inclusive.

Despite these challenges, the study was able to complete two SROI assessments for the first year of operation of the projects:

- Sandwell Make Friends with a Book – SROI ratio of **1:3.8**
- Nottingham Homework Club – SROI ratio of **1:1.7**

This evaluation update has revisited each of these projects for the calendar year 2010, and has also completed an assessment for a further project in Westminster, Church Street library, the Bengali Women’s Conversation Group.

### Methodological concerns for the update evaluation

Given the concerns raised in the previous study, and a similarly tight timetable in the completion of this study, it is important to define at the outset the approach that

was taken to update the assessments. This is particularly important in light of recent research about the approach, in terms of its ambitions and challenges.<sup>54</sup>

**Resource:** In this update evaluation, the SROI element was one part of a broader approach to understanding the impact of the whole Community Libraries programme. It was designed in the first study and the update to be an assessment of specific projects that made up the work of the libraries. The high costs of conducting SROI assessments fully has been noted by recent research, and the resource available within this study has restricted the time available to consult with and discuss all issues with stakeholders. In this instance, therefore, the work of agreeing and defining costs and values has been restricted to project staff, beneficiaries and broader stakeholders were possible. In some instances, other evidence from stakeholders (such as evaluation reports) has been used to supplement this. It is clear that this does not meet the full methodological ambition of SROI in truly involving all stakeholders.

**Tracking and updating progress:** Given the other methodological concerns highlighted, the approach has been taken to focus the work on updating the previous SROI assessments. There are concerns about the ability of SROI to be comparable when looking across projects. (In the instance of the June 2010 study – is the difference in the ratios a claim that one project is delivering over twice as much a return on investment?) Therefore, the focus has been one of using a similar methodology and updating it over time. The desire is to understand whether value is being maintained and or increased over a longer lifespan, and not to compare the three projects to each other.

**Precision and ambiguity:** The above issue of tracking over time and comparability does suggest an ambiguity in the method, and a lack of precision in what the approach is able to do with the available resources. In this instance, however, it is not possible for this study to be clear as to whether the lack of precision is a result of the insufficient resource, or an inherent flaw in the approach.

**Displacement and attribution:** Given the above points, it has been less clear about whether the projects were creating displacement. In all three examples, there is good evidence from the stakeholders involved that this is not the case, but the methodology has been quite self selecting in terms of stakeholders involved, and so concerns about displacement are unresolved in this approach. The more complex issue that has influenced these examples, however, is one of attribution.

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<sup>54</sup> *The ambitions and challenges of SROI, Arvidson, Lyon, McKay and Moro for TSRC, December 2010.*

In terms of the Community Libraries Programme evaluation as a whole, the issue of attribution has been one of trying to understand what is happening in these libraries that would not have been happening without the investment, and would not be happening in a library without a strong community engagement ethos. Typically in SROI the question of attribution is one of how much the outcome can be attributed to that project, rather than other external factors or interventions. In using SROI assessments of projects as evidence for the success of the Community Library Programme, there are difficult issues of attribution. A Homework Club and a Make Friends with a Book style reading group have and do occur in other libraries. Causality and attribution is not, therefore, completely clear.

**Overall**, therefore, there are risks within the approach that has been used by this study, and it can be justifiably asserted that this has not met the full ambitions of SROI. These reservations must be considered when using the findings.

### Project examples

This study has updated the two examples that were used in the previous evaluation. Libraries continued to have concerns about the resource required to deliver the approach, and when conflated with the timetable of the evaluation, it was clear that an update was more appropriate an approach.

This study has also completed an SROI study for a project in Westminster, which was used as a library in the 'intensive' group for this study, but had not been part of the intensive group in the previous study.

### Make Friends with a Book (Sandwell)

The Make Friends with a Book group is based on the 'Get into Reading' model of reading groups which have been promoted by the Reader Organisation.<sup>55</sup> It emerged in Sandwell thanks to an informal conversation between the project leader and the Community Development Manager in the two CLP libraries, and a desire to develop the approach.

The project took part in the initial evaluation, and went through the process of boundary setting, impact mapping, collecting data, modelling and calculating the impact.

This project is seen as a real success of the Community Libraries programme in Sandwell. It has been evaluated in a range of ways and from different

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<sup>55</sup> <http://thereader.org.uk/get-into-reading/>

perspectives. Sandwell PCT's Mental Health Promotion team produced a paper bringing together and updating these evaluations in January 2011.<sup>56</sup>

This concludes the following:

*Based on the evaluation findings throughout the six months of the group operation, it is clear that the group offers many wellbeing benefits to its members. Being made to feel comfortable and welcomed into the group environment seems to be the crucial stepping stone in the effectiveness of this type of intervention. Once this is established, the process of listening to stories and poems and then discussing and reflecting on these with the other members of the group begins to take effect. The fact that the majority of individuals mentioned the social function of the group shows it is the interaction between the members that is the primary catalyst in any effects on their wellbeing and mood. Although relaxation and taking pleasure in listening to the literature were mentioned by a few respondents, these were not the dominant benefits reported in comparison to the social interaction impacts.*

*From this analysis it would be recommended that for successful future 'Get Into Reading' groups, the presence of an experienced group facilitator who is skilled in managing group dynamics, who can create a comfortable and welcoming space for new and regular members, and can manage and contain a variety of emotional responses that may arise within the group is absolutely essential. Working within a community based setting means that the group membership is highly diverse, there is no 'screening' mechanism for access to the group, and no exclusion criteria and as such the facilitator has to be comfortable working with a wide range of individuals.*

*The MFWB group has proven to be an excellent example of good partnership work, the potential outcomes that can be achieved from a whole population wellbeing promotion perspective, and how this type of work can make a valid contribution towards an inclusivity, integration and reducing social isolation agenda.*

*Recommendations for the future development of this group would be to use some of the reported group outcomes as a positive marketing tool to attract more new members. WEMWBS measure should be implemented in the place of SWEMWBS to ensure maximum sensitivity to change across time. Due to such positive evaluation findings, it would be recommended that the group is made available in other Sandwell areas to reach as wide an audience as possible.*

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<sup>56</sup> 'Make Friends with a Book Evaluation Report', Sash Gelpi, Sandwell PCT, (January 2011).

This study has built very much on the approach initiated in the previous evaluation. This was partly due to issues of resource, concerns about duplicating conversations with staff, and also a desire to find results that were comparable. The big changes across the studies has been that this assessment can look back across the whole of 2010, and do it in terms of what has been delivered across the two libraries of the programme. The previous assessment looked at the pilot in Smethwick library and extrapolated the assumptions from there to cover a whole year.

### Establish scope and identify stakeholders

The key stakeholders to involve as part of the broader evaluation of the outcomes of the Community Libraries Programme who were also relevant to the SROI assessment were:

- Group participants
- Group leaders
- Sandwell MIND representatives
- Sandwell PCT (Senior Mental Health Promotion Officer)
- Community Development Manager
- Library Managers (Smethwick and Bleakhouse Libraries)

The data from the project, in terms of attendance figures and costs were all obtained through project staff.

The cost of the group leader's time is £100 per session. There have been 67 sessions across the two libraries, with 43 in Smethwick and 24 in Bleakhouse, giving a cost of **£6,700**.

The room costs would have been £8 per hour, and each session lasted two hours, giving a total of £1,072 for the year. A £2 per head figure for tea and coffee, when multiplied by the average number of users per library, gives a total cost of £1,024 (average 8 users x 43 sessions in Smethwick and average 7 users x 24 sessions in Bleakhouse). The total room costs, therefore, is **£2,096**.

In terms of the support and referrals that each group that works with Sandwell libraries is given, it was also felt that this time needed to be valued. The average hourly cost of a library assistant is used, and it assumed that each library gives one hour of support per week to the group. This is £8.20 x 52 weeks x 2 libraries, and gives a total of **£852.80** for the support.

The total costs of the group, therefore, are **£9,648.80**.

### Mapping outcomes

The outcomes were kept in terms of those that had formed the basis of the previous study. It was agreed with the stakeholders that the outcomes for the participants from the project are improved mental health, improved confidence and wellbeing, and improved community cohesion. In terms of the volunteers, it was agreed that their time was of value in supporting the group, but also that they themselves gained skills.

### Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value

Building on the previous study, all of these outcomes were quantified with a proxy, with the exception of community cohesion. Stakeholders struggled to define it in a way that could create any meaningful proxy, and so this is not incorporated into the assessment.

As with the previous assessment, on the assumption that participation in the group resulted in 1 person not attending Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), the cost saved would be £67 per week. Grossing up to an annualised value (assuming the Group could operate for 50 weeks a year), that would equate to **£3,350**. On the assumption that participation in the group resulted in 1 person not having to access a Mental Health Social Worker, the cost saved would be £45 per week. Grossing up to an annualised value (assuming the Group could operate for 50 weeks a year), that would equate to **£2,250**. These indicators and assumptions were discussed with library staff and were considered to be entirely appropriate.

Again with the confidence and wellbeing, this assessment has continued to use the value of a two hour session with a life coach as the proxy. If it assumed that the session replaces the need for a coach, then this has been calculated in terms of the number of sessions run, and the average number of attendees. In Smethwick this was 8 people for 43 sessions, or £34,400 and in Bleakhouse this was 7 people for 26 sessions, or £16,800, giving a total of **£51,200**.

In terms of the volunteering, the time of the volunteers has been valued as minimum wage for the number of hours committed (they do not provide a service that is commensurate with Library Assistants). This is £5.93 per hour, and when multiplied by the total hours of the volunteers (250 – an estimate based on different levels of involvement), gives a total value of **£1,482.50**.

One volunteer went on to get a part time job, and described the volunteering as instrumental in giving her the confidence and ability to do this. It is assumed that this job is minimum wage for 18 hours per week. Annualised, this creates a value

of **£5,550.48**. Given the lack of knowledge about how long this job will last, there are no claims above this initial income value within this assessment.

This gives a value of the volunteering as £7,032.98 and a total net value of the project as **£63,832.98** for the purpose of this assessment.

### Establishing impact

In terms of the benefits to participants, there is **deadweight** of **10%** from the initial assessment. This is maintained because of the potential for these impacts to occur through other mechanisms and networks, but the counterfactual position was difficult for participants to consider. The **displacement** is **0%** as there are no other similar classes and people travel long distances to attend these groups. The feedback from participants suggests that the outcomes have a strong **attribution** to the project, and so the **100%** from the previous assessment is maintained. A **25% drop off** is also included, as there is a level of churn.

In terms of volunteers, a **20% displacement** is assumed, and an attribution of 100% for their time. The **attribution** of the income from work is set at **50%** due to likelihood of other factors. A **drop off of 25%** is assumed for employment, but no drop off for volunteering time, as their commitment has been strong.

*Figure A2.1: Sandwell SROI Calculation*

Beneficiaries	Gross Value	Gross to Net	Net Value
Participants	£56,800	67.5%	£38,340
Volunteers (time)	£1,482.50	80%	£1,186.00
Volunteers (income)	£5,550.48	22.5%	£1,248.86
<b>Total</b>	<b>£63,832.98</b>		<b>£40,774.86</b>

### Calculating SROI

See Figure A2.4 below for the full SROI impact map. The resultant SROI ratio is **1:4.2**. This suggests a very high return on investment from the approach, and one that is driven up by the fact that an extra group has been run for a half a year in Bleakhouse library, rather than just Smethwick library as was the case for the last assessment. It essentially means that impacts are occurring for 15 individuals for half the year as well as 8 for the rest of the year. This is therefore likely to increase and highlights that involving more individuals and spreading the benefits to more individuals, creates more value.

The methodology has been kept the same to a degree for comparison purposes, but refined a little and altered to reflect that one individual has gone into work as a result of volunteering. The main driver for the ratio is the confidence and wellbeing proxy – and this is appropriate given the way in which other evaluations have highlighted the value of the project to individuals.

It is clear that this analysis does still not include any value for community cohesion, and participants did discuss the value of getting to know others and their community. Also, the time available did not allow for an appreciation of the skills of the individual who had got into work, and the true benefits of the volunteering on their life.

It is clear that increasing the scope does increase value, and that is maintained even with some measures reduced. It continues to be a successful project and the assessment underlines the greater social benefit of involving more individuals.

### **Homework Club (Nottingham)**

The Homework Club provides study support for children and young people of both primary and secondary school age in the local area. It runs for two hours every Monday, Wednesday and Friday in term times – the Monday session for primary school aged children in year five or below, the Wednesday for year six and secondary school aged young people, and the Friday is a mixed session. The club uses the community room of the library, and is well connected with the library during those times with children using both the main library and the community room – bringing books from one to the other.

The project started in September 2009 and is run by a Homework Club officer who works closely with library staff in the running of the group. At the end of 2010, there 205 children on the register – almost double the number that were registered at the end of 2009. There is approximately an even split between male and female children on the register, and the average is eight. It is recognised that it is easier to engage the younger children, but as the project has become more established, children who attended when at primary school are continuing to attend as they move to secondary school.

The group also works with 22 different volunteers, most of which are recruited from local universities. These students support the children with their homework – typically this involves spellings, reading and maths sheets. It can include all kinds of support though, and children can use laptops and other equipment depending on their homework and needs.

The Club has a strong approach to rewarding good behaviour and work, with record sheets for attendance and good work, and certificates are awarded at the end of term for things such as good behaviour, concentration and creativity. The Officer also delivers Christmas cards to the children, with positive responses. There is both a community and a learning ethos to the club.

Reports from the Officer highlight some examples of the work around learning, support and behaviour:

*“Each Monday activities for the week are planned based on a particular theme. For example, one week we did “weather”: I provided different levels of activities to suit the age range attending, including some worksheets for the older children requiring them to research using books and the internet, and weather symbols that the younger children decorated and made into a stick puppet using a straw, which we then used against a large map backdrop in a weather reporters role play. Often the children change the theme through imaginative play, using the theme I set as a starting point their learning can take many new directions. This use of imagination is actively encouraged as the children engage to a greater degree when they have a personal interest in something.”*

*“A new boy came to the library who only spoke French; I spoke to him in French and invited him to join in activities at homework club. He usually just draws or uses the computers but he has started to interact with the other children a little and homework club provided him with this environment for learning English early as he was not at school when he arrived.”*

*“One boy can get very angry and has been in trouble several times for losing his temper. He can also be very constructive, once he came in before homework club and helped me to make a worksheet for the younger children, and often pops in for a chat. He has begun to talk to me about what makes him cross, and it has been decided that we will try a system where he is sent to me if his temper becomes a problem so he can be supported in managing it.”*

### Establish scope and identify stakeholders

The key stakeholders to involve as part of the broader evaluation of the outcomes of the Community Libraries Programme who were also relevant to the SROI assessment were:

- Participants – primarily through observation due to age
- Volunteers

- Group leader
- Library staff
- Community Development staff

The data from the project, in terms of attendance figures and costs were all obtained through project staff.

In the same way as the previous report, this assessment has identified the costs of the project to space, set up and staffing.

The cost of the space would be £70 per session, or £210 per week. The club is not charged for the space, but for the 39 weeks, it can be seen to be costing **£8,190** for the room.

In the previous assessment, **£450** was spent on set up costs. Although the set up costs have now been incurred for the period of this assessment, a similar amount is retained to accept the ongoing support to volunteers, and the value of resources that is required and not included in the salary costs.

With on costs, the salary of the officer remains approximately **£5,000** per year, and this has been used in this assessment as well as the last.

This gives a total cost of the service of **£13,640**.

### Mapping outcomes

The outcomes were kept in terms of those that had formed the basis of the previous study. There is agreement that the project affects the following outcomes:

Participants:

- Improved attitude to learning
- Improved behaviour
- Improved educational outcomes (long term)
- Improved confidence

Volunteers:

- Improved skills and experience

### Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value

The Homework Club has been operating for well over a year now, and is becoming more established. There is evidence from the officer that is building up longer term relationships with the users, and is developing stronger relationships with volunteers. The project is also adapting its offer to better fit the needs of the people of the area, and is starting to look at ways in which it can also support the needs of the parents in the area – some of whom have reported struggling with their own English and Maths skills, and who want to be able to better support their children. A partnership is being developed with South Nottingham College to develop a course for these parents that can be run in the class. This has not been included in the SROI, but shows a clear potential value for the project in the future.

What has been given a value in this process is the educational support that the children gain from the class, and as with the previous study the proxy for this is the cost of a revision course. This is taken as £15 per hour. With an average of 15.5 children per class, and each class lasting two hours, and there being 117 classes in a year (39 x 3 classes per week), the value of this support is taken as £3,510 per child who attends every session in the year, or **£54,405** in total for all children.

It is clear that the stakeholders feel that there are impacts on the children in terms of their longer term learning, but all struggled to quantify that longer term value given the number of uncertainties and other factors. Therefore, as well as giving a measure to value better attendance at school (as in the last study), this assessment has combined that with a value for the longer term costs of truancy to the individual. A report by New Philanthropy Capitalism looked at these costs to individuals in terms of learning, and it was felt that this measure combined the appreciation that the group was affecting both behaviour and attitude in way that would have an impact on the children in future. Better attendance at school has, therefore, continued to be valued as the cost of one prosecution for truancy which will be saved by this: **£1,829**. The impact of truancy in terms of individual loss of income is valued at £894 less per year (this is the maximum amount when the individual is 31). Taking a very conservative approach to these figures, therefore, it is taken that £894 is for one year only, and half that amount (£447) for the ten years prior to this. No income differential is taken for the years after this due to the uncertainty. This gives a total figure per individual of **£5,364** income lost. Based on the previous assumption that the impact on attendance will save the cost of prosecution for one individual, the loss of income is applied to only one individual.

In terms of the volunteering, this assessment has not been able to agree an appropriate measure for the value of the increased skills of the volunteers. This will depend mainly on the degrees, qualifications and career routes of the

volunteers. This has, therefore, not been valued, although it is accepted by all stakeholders that this is a value of the project.

What has been valued is the time of these volunteers. This has, again, been valued as the average hourly wage of a Library Assistant (including on costs). This is £8.40 per hour, and when multiplied by the total hours of the volunteers (702), gives a total volunteering value of **£5,896.80**.

This gives a total gross value created by the project at **£67,494.80** for the purposes of this assessment.

### Establishing impact

Given the similar stakeholders as the previous study, the assumptions of deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off have been maintained. In terms of **deadweight**, this was calculated as **0%**. Whilst it is likely that some of the outcomes would have been achieved without this intervention, the stakeholder analysis was not able to define or understand this and so it was maintained at 0%.

No further understanding or **displacement** was undertaken, and so the **5%** assumed from the existence of faith based group in the area which also provide a club was maintained.

**Attribution** is maintained as **100%** due to the challenging circumstances of many homes and the lack of support available from families. As this is extra to school support, then this is not considered. If the benefits of increased attainment had been valued as oppose to the benefits of a lack of truancy, then this was have to be reconsidered.

Finally, given the fact that the average attendance is still 15, a further year into the project suggests that that drop off is not high. However, this is with a register of twice as many children, suggesting individual drop off is high. Therefore, the **50% drop off** figure is confirmed a year further into the project.

In terms of the volunteers, deadweight and drop off are maintained as 0%, and attribution is retained at 100%. This is confirmed by the long term commitment of volunteers and the fact that only their time, and not increased skills, is being valued. The **20% displacement** is also maintained, as all volunteers interviewed agreed that although this project did fit their interests, it has meant that they have no volunteered elsewhere.

Figure A2.2: Nottingham SROI Calculation

Beneficiaries	Gross Value	Gross to Net	Net Value
Participants	£61,598.00	47.5%	£29,259.05
Volunteers	£5,896.80	80%	£4,717.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>£67,494.80</b>		<b>£33,976.49</b>

### Calculating SROI

See Figure A2.5 below for the full SROI impact map. With a total cost of £13,790 and a total net value of £33,976.49, this gives a resulting SROI of **1:2.5**. This is higher than previously, and is partly due to the addition of another measure of value in the loss of income that the project is militating against.

This remains unsatisfactory, however, and does not reflect other measures such as the impact on the individuals of a greater use of the library, improved behaviour or improved results, and it does not give a value for the experience gained by the volunteers, who may go into a career in teaching or social work – all of which are highlighted as successes by the qualitative research, and all of which would affect the return on investment.

### Bengali Women’s Conversation Group (Westminster)

There have been Bengali services in Westminster libraries for over seven years. The work of the service to understand the mismatch between its user numbers and the size of the local Bengali community prompted the creation of a pilot project – driven by the Bengali outreach worker. That post has continued and been sustained since then, working across the library service but focussing on the two libraries with the largest Bengali community in their area (Church Street and Queen’s Park).

The work of the officer involves the running of a number of groups, of which the Women’s Conversation Group is one of them. There are also groups around supporting men with their reading and writing, and others geared towards young mothers and new and recent immigrants. Each group and project is run with the users and developed with the community. Whilst the Bengali community was and remains the focus of the work, a great number of users from different ethnic and faith communities also take part in the work of the project. In the words of the project worker: *‘There is a common aim of uniting the community around a common purpose of learning English’*.

Being based in the library has ensured that the work has become integrated with other parts of the library offer, including the book selection and helping users access and use IT services.

The conversation group is run by the officer, and involves women reading aloud from books, and discussing issues in English. The women are typically older, and many have never worked - supporting their families within the home, and as a result, never learning English. Often then come to the group after children have left home or after a partner/ husband has died. It is both an educational and skills focussed group, as well as a wellbeing and social group. Volunteers are part of the group in terms of supporting the women and leading the conversations.

In the same group there are also women who are well educated in their home countries, and who get more tailored one-to-one support from volunteers in improving their English for business or professional reasons. These volunteers can come from the local community, but also from institutions if they are completing a course. I.e. one volunteer was gaining experience as part of her Masters qualification at the Institute for Education.

The course was run before the investment in the library, but it is clear from the officer and the users that the big change has been the ability to run the classes in a defined and safe space, that wasn't available in the old library. This has encouraged women to use it more, and has allowed a greater capacity.

The users are very positive about the group, and highlighted a number of important outcomes.

*"I have studied in Bangladesh in an Islamic School where I learnt very little English. Since I came to UK I learnt about the Bengali Women's Reading & Writing Group. As a result of attending the reading group I now can read confidently and my speaking has improved."*

*"I could not speak a word of English when I came to this country about two years ago. I can now read and write better. I also have gained a lot of computer skills while practising "Life in the UK" at Church Street library. I have now acquired my permanent residence in the UK so that I can take part on more things".*

*"As I am new to this country I do not qualify for free English course due to immigration restrictions. However, I found the Bengali Women's Reading & Writing Group and the English Speaking Club a great alternative. I have been attending both of these and have improved my Reading and Speaking skills."*

### Establish scope and identify stakeholders

In terms of the analysis, the SROI assessment has focussed on the conversation group alone, and not the whole range of work that is completed by the Bengali outreach worker.

The key stakeholders that were interviewed as part of the broader evaluation of the programme, and also the project in particular, that evidence was gathered from included:

- Bengali Outreach Worker
- Library staff and management
- Participants
- Volunteers
- Learning Coordinator
- Westminster Family Learning

In terms of costs for the project and other administrative data, information was obtained from the project.

The costs can be seen in two key ways, the space and resource, and the time of the officer. The meeting space is provided for free to the group, but would cost £30 per hour. Each session lasts for two hours and there were 45 sessions in the year. This equals a room cost of £2,700. Tea was also provided, and based on a typical provision rate of £2 per head, this costs £990 for the year, based on 11 attendees per session and 45 sessions. The total meeting space cost, therefore, is **£3,690**.

The cost of the officer, which is difficult to break down in terms of the amount of time they spend on this project, is estimated at **£5,000** per year.

This gives a total cost of the project of **£8,690**.

### Mapping outcomes

In consultation with stakeholders it was agreed that the outcomes from the project for the participants are improved English language ability, reduced isolation, improved mental health, improved confidence and improved community cohesion.

### Evidencing outcomes and giving them a value

The project has improved, at different levels, the English language ability of participants. Although different in terms of outcomes, the value is similar to entry

level ESOL classes. In reference to London adult education colleges, this gives a value for non-EU residents of the classes at £1,190. For 11 participants, this equals **£13,090**.

In terms of reducing isolation, which came across strongly from participants as an important outcome, the proxy value used is that of the cost of voluntary sector day care. This is attributed to 5 individuals from the group – as not all of the participants would gain this outcome, for 3 days a week. It was felt inappropriate to claim that the two hour session justified a full week's day care. This costs £36 per day. Across the year, this would total **£28,080**.

In terms to improvements to mental health, it was agreed that this was linked to the isolation issue, but that there were important connections for some members – one reporting no longer taking anti-depressants after starting the group. Therefore, the cost of CBT for 2 individuals across the weeks of the year that the course is running, based on CBT costing £67 per session, would be **£6,030**.

Although agreed by participants and stakeholders as outcomes, this assessment has not captured value for confidence and community cohesion as all struggled with definition and appropriate proxies. This gives a total net value of £47,200 for participants.

Volunteers gave their time, and it was also felt that the skills they learned, particularly those volunteers who worked in a way that supported their degrees, was a clear outcome. This, however, was a challenge for all participants to value; one volunteer discussed the uncertainty in what work she would do after this. The value of their time, however, was rated at the hourly rate of the London living wage £7.85 against the estimated volunteering hours (180). This gives a value of their time at **£1,413.00**.

The total net value of the project, therefore, is **£48,613.00**.

### Establishing impact

Impact is, from the perspectives of the users very much about integration into the English language, but with secondary social benefits that reduce isolation, improve mental health, and develop community cohesion. The group is called a Bengali Women's group, but it does work with individuals from a number of different communities, and there was reported increased understanding in feedback from members.

No **deadweight** is assumed due to how disconnected these women are from other services and networks as a result of their lack of English.

There is a small amount of **displacement** assumed because of the potential for these women to go to other classes. Given how disconnected they are, however, this is estimated at **5%**. This also means that **attribution is 100%**.

Finally, it is very clear that for some of these individuals the outcomes will not be maintained, and there is a level of churn in terms of people dropping out of the project. This gives as **drop off of 50%**.

In terms of volunteers, there is no deadweight or drop off, due to the commitment of volunteers, and attribution is 100% as only time is being measured. There is a **50% displacement** however, as about half the volunteers are from programmes that would have got volunteering elsewhere.

*Figure A2.3: Westminster SROI Calculation*

Beneficiaries	Gross Value	Gross to Net	Net Value
Participants	£47,200	47.5%	£22,420
Volunteers	£1,413	50%	£706.50
<b>Total</b>	<b>£48,613</b>		<b>£23,126.50</b>

### Calculating SROI

See Figure A2.6 below for the full SROI impact map. Given the total costs of £8,690 and the value of £23,126.50, the resulting SROI is **1:2.7**. This clearly underlines the value of the project, but does not include benefits to increased personal confidence, improvements to local community cohesion, or the value of the skills and experienced gained by volunteers.

It can be seen as a good illustration of the project's benefit, but does not further the understanding of how the project works with the women.

### Conclusions and judgements

Each of these projects can be seen as a great success in their own terms and context. They work with their community and support a number of valuable outcomes and impacts for the individuals who use them. They are all highly valued by users, stakeholders and library staff.

What is less clear is whether this approach of evaluating them in this context with an SROI assessment is appropriate, and also whether the methodology used can be considered a full and truly resourced SROI.

The evidence suggests that the reservations and potential problems highlighted in the previous evaluation have not gone away, and even being aware of them has not helped mitigate them.

This study concludes, therefore, that an SROI approach is not a suitable use of resources when it is part of an evaluation of a broader programme, unless it can be very clearly linked to evaluation objectives of that study and clearly resourced. The compromises that have to be made when this is not the case can be seen to undermine the ability to use the findings of the SROI assessments with great confidence, or to do a truly rigorous and depth SROI assessment.

In terms of the approach being used in libraries more broadly, there are also concerns. Library staff had mixed views about the value of this approach in illustrating their work and the value of what is delivered in libraries. Some were interested in a more quantitative approach of using financial proxies, but others felt that it still missed true value. Those things that are developed and built in the relationships of engagement over time are, however rigorous the study, difficult to place an accurate financial proxy against.

What is very positive about the approach, however, is the ability for libraries to use this methodology as a way to understand their ability to deliver outcomes for broader agendas. In mapping outcomes, and considering proxy values for what those outcomes are worth, libraries are able to articulate their service offer to others in a different way. The Make Friends with a Book group, could use an SROI analysis to articulate the value of its work on supporting mental health. This framework does allow for commissioners to think differently about how the outcomes they are looking to achieve could be delivered, and allows libraries a methodology for considering their ability to create value through their delivery of projects and services.

The main conclusions from this study and three assessments are:

- These project examples have great value, and this attempted SROI assessment goes some way in defining and understanding that value. It misses some of the more qualitative benefits, but is a mechanism of highlighting the value of outcomes delivered in libraries, which could be the starting point for future conversations with commissioners about
- The SROI approach should only be used when it can be properly resourced. It should also be clearly understood as to what the aims of the assessment are before undertaking them. This exercise does highlight the potential to use this as a mechanism for evidencing the ability of libraries to deliver multiple outcomes through their resources.

Figure A2.4: Make Friends with a Book SROI Impact Map

Assessment period: 2010

Inputs		Outputs		Outcomes								
Definition	Value	Definition	Quantity	Description	Indicator	Source	Quantity	Duration	Proxy	Value	Source	Total
Group leader	£6,700.00	Smethwick groups	43	Health improved	Reduced GP visits	Group members	No data	1 year	CBT costs	£67.00	Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2010) Curtis	£3,350.00
Room costs	£2,096.00	Smethwick attendance	8		Reduced social worker visits	Group members	No data	1 year	Mental health social worker	£45.00	Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2010) Curtis	£2,250.00
Support	£852.80	Bleakhouse groups	24	Improved confidence and wellbeing	Warwick - Edinburgh Evaluation tool scores	PCT survey data	Declining scores	1 year	Life coach costs	£50.00	Life coaches website	£51,200.00
		Bleakhouse attendance	7	Community cohesion	None selected	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	£0
		Volunteers	3	Volunteer hours	Volunteer hours	Project data	Project data	No data	Minimum wage	£5.93	Direct Gov	£1,482.50
		Volunteer hours	250	Enhanced skills	Working	Participant	No data	No data	Minimum wage (18 hours)	£5.93	Direct Gov	£5,550.48
	<b>£9,648.80</b>											<b>£63,832.98</b>

Analysis					
Deadweight	Displacement	Attribution	Drop Off	Net impact	SROI
Participants 10%	Participants 0%	Participants 100%	Participants 25%	£38,340.00	Input costs total £9,648.80.  Net impacts total £40,774.86
Volunteers (time) 0%	Volunteers (time) 20%	Volunteers (time) 100%	Volunteers (time) 0%	£1,186.00	
Volunteers (income) 0%	Volunteers (income) 40%	Volunteers (income) 50%	Volunteers (income) 25%	£1,248.86	
				<b>£40,774.86</b>	<b>1:4.2</b>

Figure A2.5: Homework Club SROI Impact Map

Assessment period: 2010

Inputs		Outputs		Outcomes								
Defined	Value	Definition	Quantity	Description	Indicator	Source	Quantity	Duration	Proxy	Value	Source	Total
Group leader	£5,150.00	Sessions	110	Improved behaviour	Behavioural improvements	Officer, volunteers, parents, teachers	No data	No data	No data	N/A	N/A	
Room costs	£8,190.00	Children on register	205	Positive attitude to learning	Better attendance at school	Teachers	1	1 year	1 fewer prosecution for truancy	£1829 per person	DCSF data	£1,829.00
Set up costs	£450.00	Annual attendance	1712				1	11 years	Changes to income (lifetime) for one individual	£894 per person - one year's income difference (max) for ten years	New Philanthropy Capital - the costs of truancy and exclusion	£5,364.00
		Average attendance	15.5		Reported improvement in attitude to learning	Club attendees, officer, teachers	15.5	No data - 1	Revision classes	£15 per hour per child, for 15 children 3 times a week for 39 weeks	Websites of those offering revision courses	£54,405.00

		Volunteers	22	Increased volunteering	Hours volunteered	Attendance sheets	3	1	Value of time (library assistant)	£8.40 per hour over 702 hours per year	Staff	£5,896.80
		Volunteer hours	702									£5,550.48
	<b>£13,790.00</b>											<b>£73,045.28</b>

Analysis					
Deadweight	Displacement	Attribution	Drop Off	Net impact	SROI
Participants 0%	Participants 5%	Participants 100%	Participants 50%	£29,259.05	Input costs total £13,790.00.  Net impacts total £33,976.49
Volunteers (time) 0%	Volunteers (time) 20%	Volunteers (time) 100%	Volunteers (time) 0%	£4,717.44	
				<b>£33,976.49</b>	<b>1:2.5</b>

Figure A2.6: Bengali Women's Conversation Group SROI Impact Map

Assessment period: 2010

Inputs		Outputs		Outcomes								
Definition	Value	Definition	Quantity	Description	Indicator	Source	Quantity	Duration	Proxy	Value	Source	Total
Group leader	£5,000.00	Average attendance	11	Improved English Language ability	Improvements monitored in class and through progress plans	Officer, users, volunteers, adult education team	11	1 year	ESOL entry level 1/2/3 class	£1190 per course	Adult education colleges	£13,090.00
Room costs	£3,690.00	Sessions	45	Reduced isolation	Self reported improvements	Users and officer	5	1 year	Cost of voluntary sector day care	£36 per day	Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2010) Curtis	£28,080.00
				Mental health improved	Reduced GP visits	Group members	2	1 year	CBT costs	£67 per session	Unit Costs of Health and Social Care (2010) Curtis	£6,030.00
		Volunteers per session	2	Increased volunteering	Attendance	Project records	180	1 year	London living wage	£7.85 per hour	Greater London Authority (2011)	£1,413.00
		Volunteer hours	180									
	<b>£8,690.00</b>											<b>£48,613.00</b>

Analysis					
Deadweight	Displacement	Attribution	Drop Off	Net impact	SROI
Participants 0%	Participants 5%	Participants 100%	Participants 50%	£22,738.25	Input costs total £8,690.00.  Net impacts total £23,444.75
Volunteers 0%	Volunteers 50%	Volunteers 100%	Volunteers 0%	£706.50	
				<b>£23,444.75</b>	<b>1:2.7</b>

## Appendix 4 – Impacts on the service approach

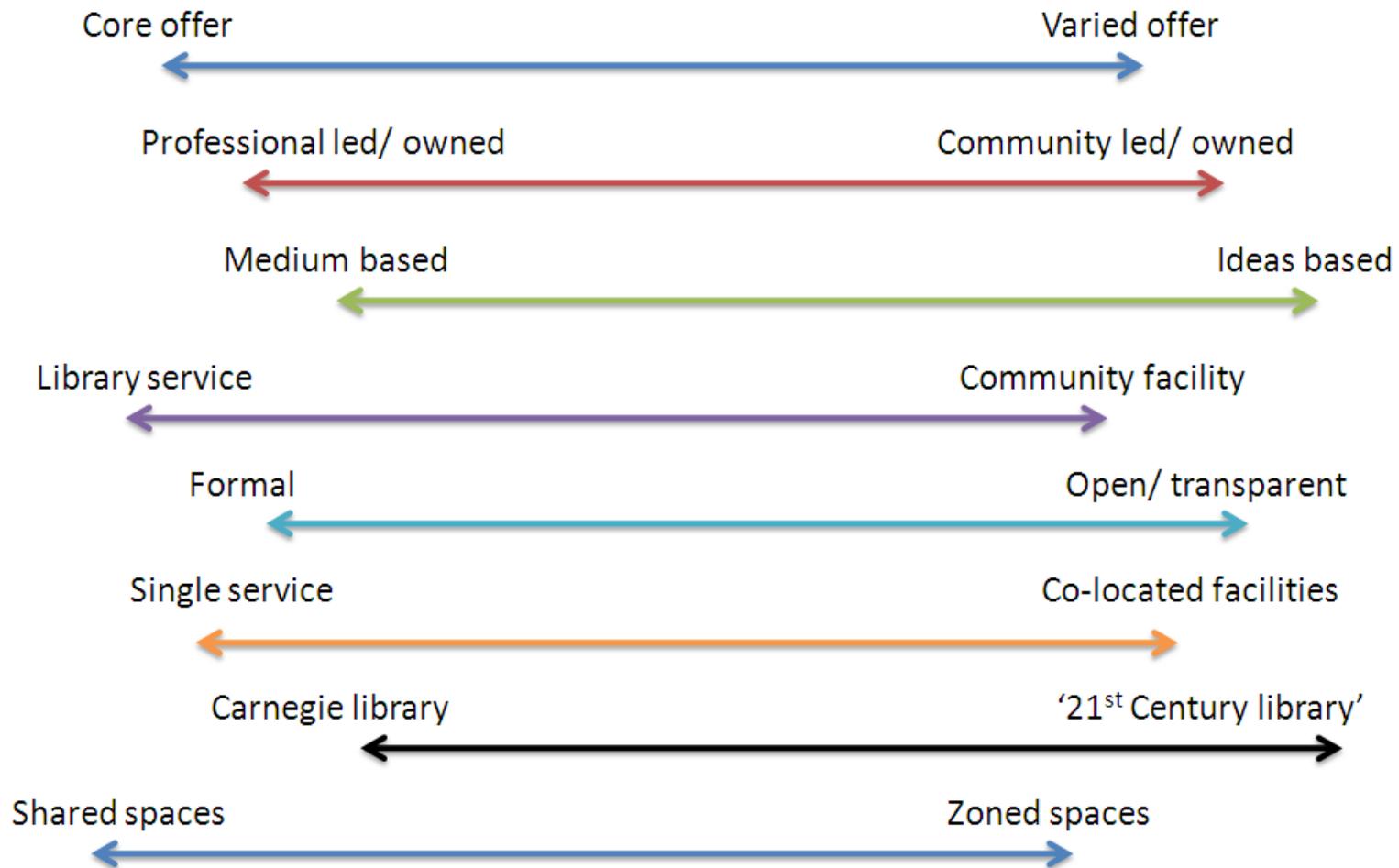
The impacts section of this report describes, in a range of ways, changes to culture, style and approach to service delivery within the libraries. That section has identified a number of clear impacts as a result of these changes, but the evidence from the research highlights that there are also process changes which are harder to quantify or qualify. These include the shifts in expectations place on staff, the feeling that staff have that their role is a little different than it used to be, that libraries are thinking differently about how to involve their residents, that people are starting to use the library for different things – and that that is acceptable.

As the policy introduction to this report highlights, there are a number of issues that have been ongoing within the library services in terms of strategic change. These can be seen as tensions. Is the library a place for just a core-offer of books and information, or should it be about a range of community needs? Should a library look like a traditional (Carnegie) library, or be a more flexible space and (potentially as a result) a more generic building? Is the library run and owned by the professionals for citizens, or is it run with and through the community?

Whilst described above as binary positions, it is clear that no library is one or the other of these, and the CLP has not introduced these questions and tensions. What it has done, however, is to highlight them again for staff, users and managers, and to force them to collectively answer the question again about what they want their library to be. Therefore, conceptually, the programme can be seen to have moved the library along these tensions – to varying degrees. This is not easy to quantify, or possible to claim direct attribution, but it is clearly happening as a result of the programme.

The diagram below highlights some of these tensions that the programme has raised for the libraries who were involved in the programme.

## Ongoing tensions in the library service...



## Appendix 5 – User questionnaire

The following tables are a summary of the findings from a questionnaire undertaken within the five intensive libraries. The questionnaires were completed in libraries with users who were in the library on the day of fieldwork visits. Fieldwork took place between January 17<sup>th</sup> and February 4<sup>th</sup> 2011.

110 questionnaires were completed across eight different libraries within the five library authorities. These results were not weighted. They have been used throughout the report to give a flavour of change experienced by individuals who were in the libraries during the fieldwork.

A comments box was also used as a method of collecting further responses from individuals, and these have been used in the report only if they support points evidenced elsewhere, as they were not weighted or sampled in a way to provide robust findings in and of themselves.

Demographic information was collected from all individuals, but the base was too small to break down the sample in any meaningful way on demographic groups.

**Community Libraries – user questionnaire**

**1. For what reasons are you using the library today? (Tick as many as apply)**

To read/borrow books	61%	To attend classes in the library	8%
To read news papers and magazines	13%	To access services based in the library	5%
To borrow other resources (CDs/DVDs)	8%	To use computer facilities	26%

**2. What would you say is your primary use for the library today?**

.....

**3. How often do you visit the library?**

More than once a week	44%	About once a week	24%
About once a month	23%	Once every few months	4%
Less often	2%	First visit	4%

**4. For how long have you been visiting the library?**

Under 6 months	17%	6 months – 1 year	7%
Over 1 year	75%		

**5. What best describes how you tend to use the library? (Tick as many as apply)**

Using/borrowing books	54%	Hobby/general interest	43%
Events and activities	17%	Learning/skill development	32%
Socialising/meeting people	12%		

**6. What were the reasons you hadn't used the library before?**

Unaware of the library	3%	Unaware of the services it had to offer	8%
Perceptions of the library	3%	Not applicable	86%

The library has recently gone through some changes in terms of its building, but also how it is run.

**8. When were you first aware that changes to the library were taking place?**

Before they started	55%	During the changes	22%
After the changes had been implemented	8%	No answer	15%

**9. In what ways were you consulted on the changes in the library?**

Events/consultation in the library	33%	Events/consultation at other local venues	0%
I wasn't consulted	52%	No answer	15%

**10. What are your own perceptions of the library since the improvement? (Tick as many as apply)**

It is busier	25%	It is friendlier	27%
Different users	15%	Different services	23%
More appropriate services	21%		

**11. Has your usage of the library changed since the library re-opened?**

I visit more often	26%	I attend more/different groups and activities	10%
I attend more events at the library	12%	I am a more involved/active member	5%
It hasn't changed	48%		

## Appendix 6 – Methodology

This appendix describes our methodological approach for the update to the Community Libraries Programme evaluation.

This evaluation was designed to complement and update the evaluation findings from the 2010 study in a way that demonstrates outcomes and impacts from the project. The challenge for the evaluation was to build on the research and conception that has already been designed, but to also challenge, refine and amend that where necessary.

### Summary - Research questions

The key research objectives for this project were:

- To demonstrate outcomes and impact in line with the existing evaluation framework for community engagement in public libraries
- To provide an update to the evaluation findings from June 2010 and show where libraries have progressed, and where libraries struggled to develop their engagement activities further, and why.
- To demonstrate and communicate the learning in order to inform policy making by key national policy makers in MLA and BIG Lottery Fund, and wider stakeholders.
- To inform and share practice among libraries.

Given the below challenges, methods, data and conceptual framework considerations, the key research questions for this study are:

- What are the evidenced outcomes of the community engagement activities of individual libraries in terms of the key lines of inquiry:
  - workforce development
  - partnership working
  - learning and skills
  - wellbeing
  - volunteering
  - sustaining and advancing community engagement
- What is the theory of change across the logic chain which explains how outcomes were delivered, or missed, in individual libraries?

- What are the key factors across the programme which contributes to the achievement of community engagement and empowerment outcomes?
- What work are individual libraries doing to sustain this work at a time of reducing resources across the public sector?
- How can the learning from the programme best support future policy direction, both in and beyond the library sector?

### Research challenges

There were a number of key challenges to consider in terms of this research project:

#### Sampling

The research population for this research was the group of library authorities which received funding from BIG.

The sample group has already been selected, through the earlier research processes. They were selected to gain a wide representation of bids across a number of areas. One of these has already been changed (Slough has been removed from the intensive group and replaced by Lancashire) and one more was changed for this study (Bristol being replaced by Westminster).

This will not affect methodology as all the authorities were very different, but it will be important to consider when presenting findings, as accurate and representative sampling was clearly a challenge for previous studies.

#### Bias

A number of the data sources used were ones with an inherent level of bias. The self assessment questionnaire was completed by and with library staff. Monitoring forms were also self-selecting and biased.

The approach of working with staff to produce evidence, however, ensured richer results, and also other potential outcomes from the process, such as an ownership of conclusions from the libraries themselves.

It was important to challenge the data through conducting primary research to challenge these findings through other sources: participants, staff, management, volunteers and partners were all engaged in the evidence gathering for this research.

#### Timing

Whilst a much greater number of projects had completed the capital build and were delivering a programme of activities than had at the time of the last

evaluation, there were still problems in judging impact and outcomes across the whole programme.

The research was focussed on those that have completed work – and this was helped by updating the intensive group research. Where possible, conclusions were also drawn from monitoring returns etc., but there is an acceptance that no full impact analysis can be done until the programme has been completed and running for a sustained period of time, given the nature of community engagement and length of time required to deliver outcomes.

Finally, the timing of the research was also important in terms of the uncertainty for staff. The fieldwork was undertaken towards the end of the financial year and it is noted that there was uncertainty for many individuals who took part in the evaluation process over their future roles. Whilst staff were very helpful and willing to take part, the timing of this research was not typical for them and so obviously affected the fieldwork to some degree.

#### **Other funding impact**

In attempting to understand the outcomes and impacts of the community engagement work, there were a number of issues that made it difficult to specifically identify impacts resulting from community engagement resources. This occurred in terms of the capital build, which arguably over-inflated the change in community usage of a new centre. There was also an impact in terms of future funding cuts. Given the uncertainty within the public sector, there was a large degree of uncertainty in terms of the sustainability of the projects. These projects may have been sustained within a different climate and an understanding of the reasons for any cessation of services next financial year was essential.

There was a need to work closely with research participants to understand this, particularly through primary fieldwork with residents and staff. It required appropriate topics of discussion to be build into the topic guides

#### **Conceptual framework**

The previous evaluation used a logic chain to consider the work of the programme, and it was important to build on that framework. Much of the evaluation was about describing the work of the libraries in a way that demonstrated the changes to delivery and approach. This study built upon and furthered that framework through adding more detail, evidence and understanding to the outcomes and impacts sections, but also by adding a theory of change to it. How does one lead to the other?

This study also, within this framework, considered common language and understandings of community engagement across local government through the principle of the recent work of the IDeA, ‘*The ideal empowering authority: an illustrated framework*’.

This conceptual framework was built upon as we the evaluation progressed, and can be found in Appendix 7 below.

### Data

There were a range of secondary sources of data available for this study, and it was particularly important to use the secondary data in this process, as so much descriptive data had already been collected through previous evaluation and monitoring processes:

- Project applications and plans
- Monitoring forms
- Local administrative data
- Baseline report and data
- Evaluation report and data

### Methods

The diagram below is a way to highlight that there were methods that were required for all libraries, but also some that are specific to individual groups of libraries within the sampling frame.



This underlines that most information was gained for the intensive group of libraries. That is not to suggest, however, that there was not a large amount of descriptive information available for all libraries across the programme which allowed for analysis across the programme.

### Review data

In reviewing the data available, it was important to structure this for analytical purposes and to understand the whole programme. This was delivered through a database which collated all the information available from the monitoring forms.

### Self assessment

The self assessment tool built upon the data review in terms of the key lines of enquiry. It asked questions to help the library develop its argument and be clear of its evidence around outcomes and impacts against the key lines of enquiry. It used the logic chain from the previous study as a backdrop, but focussed on evidencing impacts and outcomes.

The tool was delivered with five intensive libraries in the library areas, and one control library. It was also delivered remotely with 16 library areas. Two of those 16 were not able to support the process, but information available from other sources was used to provide a broad understanding of change in those libraries.

The first evaluation report allowed for the key themes of study to be developed (volunteering, workforce development, partnership working, impact on health and wellbeing and impact on learning and skills) and so it was essential that this study focused on those themes. For this reason, the questioning of the self assessment was not structured around the community engagement descriptions that libraries considered at the start of the programme when developing their plans. This was not to ignore the importance of thinking about the elements and levels of community engagement, but rather to ensure that the research tools of this study focused on understanding outcomes and impacts.

This meant that evidencing impact was reliant on libraries recording more information about their service than just that required by monitoring forms, and at times this information was not collected consistently or comprehensively.

The self assessment was completed in partnership between the libraries and the research team. The self-assessment firstly asked the libraries to map their community engagement activities by theme using the logic chain approach and then to consider their strengths against key features of success for each theme by reflecting back on the mapping they have previously undertaken. Any data that

was already available to the research team from monitoring was inserted into the self-assessment tool before sending to libraries.

This constituted a first round of challenge, where a library practitioner and a team member experienced in using self-assessment tools with public sector organisations worked to ensure that the self assessment is evidence-based and outcome focussed.

The key factors of excellence that were used within the toolkit are detailed below by theme:

#### *Volunteering*

- There is clear commitment at all levels in the library to involving volunteers and recognition that volunteering is a two-way process which benefits volunteers and the organisation
- Appropriate resources are available to working with volunteers such as money, management, staff time and materials
- The library involves volunteers who reflect the diversity of the local community and actively seeks to do this
- The roles developed for volunteers are appropriate and in line with the libraries aims and objectives which are of value to the volunteers
- A fair, efficient and consistent recruitment procedure is in place for all potential volunteers
- The library takes account of the varying support and supervision needs of volunteers
- New services and activities have been developed in response to volunteers experience and suggestions

#### *Partnership working*

- Managerial and operational staff have a full understanding of how partnerships help achieve the community library project aims and objectives
- Managerial and operational staff are clear about the status of partnerships and the decision making responsibilities allocated to them
- People who work with and in partnerships are clear and confident about their roles and responsibilities, in their own organisation and partnerships, and are empowered to take decisions

- The implications and impact of partnership arrangement aims, objectives and priorities for delivery of the community library project are taken into account in the budget and service planning process
- Appropriate resources have been identified and are available to support, develop and implement appropriate & robust partnership structures & processes
- The partnership structure / organisation regularly monitors, reviews and evaluates the ongoing benefits to itself of its involvement in partnerships, and is clear about their value.

#### *Workforce development*

- There is a common understanding of what community engagement is, what outcomes it will deliver and why it is important across the workforce of the project.
- An assessment of workforce development needs has identified the training and development needs of staff, managerial and operational, around community engagement.
- Training / workforce development activities are delivered through a range of mechanisms within appropriate environments.
- The workforce, understands the needs and aspirations of the community.
- Appropriate resources are available to support staff development activity including funding, management support, time and materials.
- Frontline staff are empowered to take action to deliver community defined activities and outcomes, and have channels to feed back information into the BIG Community Library project.
- Workforce development activity is shared and available to all partner organisations. Good practice and lessons learnt are shared across the partnership.

#### *Learning and skills*

- The learning and skills programme of activity has been developed in line with evidence of need
- The learning and skills programme is clearly defined.
- Appropriate levels of resource are available to support learning and skills activities. These include funding, appropriate staff resources & materials
- Partners jointly agree and plan the learning and skills programme.

- Users / participant feedback is collected, reviewed and used to plan future delivery

#### *Health and wellbeing*

- The core library offer on health and well-being is based on an understanding of local health issues.
- The core library offer on health and well-being is clearly defined.
- The links between the different elements of your health and well-being offer (core services and activities) are mapped and understood.
- The role of library staff as health advocates is understood, valued and invested in.
- All staff are clear about where the function to develop health and well-being activity lies.
- Joint planning takes place on a regular basis with health partners to develop new ways the library service can contribute to improving health and well-being.
- Does the library undertake consultation (either alone or with partners) with users and non-users on what activities the library can offer to improve health and well-being
- The core library offer on health and well-being is actively promoted.

#### **Challenge**

The evaluation team challenged the findings from the self assessments, requesting more information, challenging assumptions, and questioning the logic chain around impacts and outcomes.

#### **Primary research**

Following the completion of the self assessment, there was a need - partly to mitigate any impact of bias and partly to have further opportunity to explore questions of impact - to develop ideas around a theory of change in the libraries. This can be difficult to achieve in the context of a form, which can encourage participants to consider the issues in the way that they have been delivered.

The purpose of the primary research was to develop understandings of individual and practical successes, and how these contribute towards the successes, impacts and outcomes of the policy (Community Libraries).

The main research tools for the primary research were topic guides for semi structured interviews. The topic guides were developed following the completion of the self assessment, and they reflected the work of libraries. Topic guides were

produced for frontline staff, partner organisations, volunteers and management staff.

The structure of the primary research involved different audiences and also different research techniques. Our approach to the primary research started with structured telephone interviews especially with partners and stakeholders, but also some level of follow up with key staff.

Intensive libraries were then visited for two days, and users, frontline staff, and volunteers were interviewed. The team also completed an SROI analysis where relevant, (see below). As the focus of the evaluation is on impacts and outcomes, this will be particularly important.

A short questionnaire was used to interview a random sample of users in the library over the period of the fieldwork, to understand the views of individuals who use the service, but are less engaged in specific management or projects. These results can be found in Appendix 5.

Non-users are a particularly difficult group to sample, and although this was attempted in the study, there was not sufficient resource or time to deliver a robust sample of non-users.

Throughout the fieldwork, over 90 individuals were interviewed and categorised as volunteers, frontline staff, partners or management staff. This categorisation was important for analysis, as these groups were analysed across the programme as well as within libraries. The user questionnaire of general users within the library was also conducted in the intensive libraries, with a sample of 110 achieved.

### SROI analysis

The logic chain model, when used at a programme and library level, allowed for an analysis across the programme and an understanding of the outcomes and impacts of the programme as a whole. The first evaluation highlighted the need to understand the precise impact of individual projects within the delivery structures of community libraries, and used social return on investment as a way to quantify the value of the investment in those specific projects. That study did stress how difficult the process of a full SROI assessment can be, and how much it required the buy-in and involvement of the libraries and the participants.

This assessment was repeated for two projects that took part in the previous study, and a new project was also analysed as part of this study. More details of the methodology and findings are within Appendix 3.

## Analysis

Analysis was completed in three ways.

- The self assessment tools were completed and collated for 21 libraries to give a quantitative picture of change across these libraries. Findings were collated in way that allowed for common changes to be recorded and compared across the programme.
- The depth interviews from the primary research were compiled as part of a framework analysis. This allowed for all interviews to be divided up along key themes and structured in terms of how different stakeholder groups experienced the programme. This approach allows for an appreciation of the range of ways in which different stakeholder groups have experienced the programme, and gives a clear analytical tool for a programme wide analysis. These frameworks were then also divided across libraries, to understand the types of successes, approaches and impacts that were occurring in different libraries. This analysis was used in the answering of research questions around the key success factors as it allowed those factors to be pulled out of the whole programme, but individual case studies of libraries could be highlighted. It is acknowledged that this approach has reduced the ability of the study to make clear statements about variation within the programme, but it has allowed a strong qualitative approach to understand the range of impacts across the programme.
- Finally, the user survey was analysed for trends and views across all libraries. This supplements other findings and analysis.

All of this analysis was structured around both the logic chain and the key lines of enquiry (as can be seen in the evaluation framework).

## Appendix 7 – Evaluation Framework

There have been two studies already commissioned and delivered, a background report in early 2008, and a full evaluation in mid 2010. It is important to first understand the broad research framework of the MLA, and then to use the questions and analytical points from those studies, to understand the conceptual issues in play during the life of the programme, and the sorts of questions that need to be asked about its impact.

It will also be important to consider a broad framework for community engagement and empowerment that works across the public sector rather than just the library service. This will allow for an understanding of some of the broader themes. In this instance we have used a framework produced by IDeA, *The ideal empowering authority: an illustrated framework*.

### MLA Research Principles

The research framework for the MLA – *MLA Research & Evaluation Framework 2007-2010: Why do we invest in Research and Evaluation?* – states that all research must meet one or all of the three strategic priorities:

- Continuous improvement
- Learning and skills
- Sustainable communities and their economies

Specifically, the results are used to provide answers to one or all of the following key questions:

<i>Reaching targets &amp; strategic objectives</i>	Has the programme or activity reached its agreed targets? What contribution does it make to MLA's strategic targets and objectives?
<i>Implementation</i>	How effective was the management of the programme or activity in delivering agreed objectives and reaching targets?
<i>Outcomes</i>	What are the effects of the programme or activity on our main stakeholders (in particular MLA users)?
<i>Additionality</i>	Could the same impact have been reached through different programmes or activities?

<i>Policy &amp; Programme Development</i>	What are the needs of the sectors? What has worked in the past to meet those needs, for whom and in what circumstance? What are key trends that may affect the future of the sector? What areas of need is MLA best equipped to tackle?
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This means that research and evaluation projects need to be clearly linked not only to strategic objectives but also to the key questions they will help answer.

### **The Ideal Empowering Authority**

Local Government improvement and development, previous IDeA, produced a framework based on research with a Network of Empowering Authorities to create a benchmark for local authorities. This is the standard ‘that all authorities, working with their communities and partners, should be aspiring to reach’.

The three pillars of that framework are:

- Mainstreaming empowerment and developing a business case
- Working with diverse communities and neighbourhoods
- The role of councillors in community empowerment

There is more detail and specific questions that sit behind these principles, but they provide a simple and clear way to consider community engagement and empowerment

### **Baseline report**

Six key areas were identified as have the potential to greatly increase the positive results for individuals and communities. As well as looking at the libraries, this report highlighted what are, in effect, the key success factors. The below list highlights the factors, quotes from the report, and then presents the key issues for consideration in evaluation.

### **Vision and goals**

‘There is a lack of shared vision across and within authorities on what community engagement means in practice. Libraries are focussed on outreach and service use, but no on improvement of the library service as a tool for community development.’

There is a vision for the library itself, but is there a vision for change in the community and a changing service offer, and is that vision communicated appropriately?

### Community segmentation

‘Community segmentation is often based on traditional demographic and community groups, not predictive, behavioural or interest based sectors. As such, service offerings are products rather than service experiences.’

The key approach needs to be one which develops segments of the community, uses community segments as a consideration to design service offer, targets communications, works with groups, and build this understanding into monitoring and measurement.

### Organisational transformation

*‘While there is a recognition that the roles of staff will have to change significantly in organisations engaging the community in the design, delivery and management of library services, there is little evidence of real planning of new roles and behaviours, change processes, or engagement with staff to communicate and develop new approaches.’*

The first priority is to identify new ways of working. It is then important to engage with frontline staff in the vision for this. Other key questions include understanding the capacity of the Chief Librarians, and management structures, and then use all of this to develop effective and appropriate workforce development processes.

### Effective communications

*‘Public perceptions of libraries are still outdated and negative, and while basic communications are taking place and sending out positive messages, there is still a need to put in practice the basics of marketing the service, including good signage and communications within the library building and in the community about simple service information such as opening hours and services offered.’*

Understand the current perceptions, target communications, create a narrative around what is good about libraries, and communicate in the context of ‘Community’ Libraries.

### Real social networks

*‘Community engagement as a concept has developed, and many staff interviewed do explicitly differentiate engagement from consultation. But there is no unified vision of what community engagement is, and many still have a basic understanding, which sees it as about outreach and service use. The*

*development and understanding of community engagement and project processes varies significantly, mainly depending on whether there is an ongoing refurbishment or transformation programme in the library service and the level of cross-council and partner involvement.'*

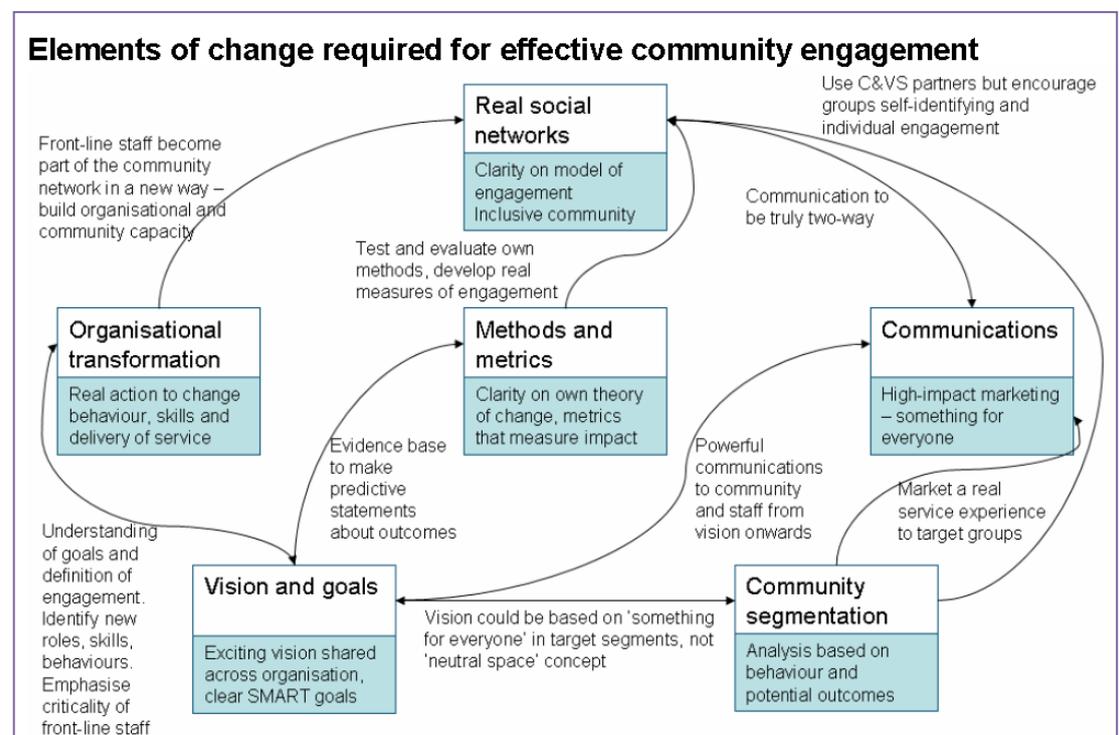
Develop an approach to community engagement, understand that small steps are needed to start with, consider the opportunities and risks, and implement with all staff.

### Methods and metrics

*'While there was near unanimity in identifying 'busy, buzzy' libraries as the pre-eminent indicators of success, community engagement is not as yet informed by and real theory or methodology about what works to engage the community.'*

Developing methods and metrics and use existing methods of understanding community development as a way to demonstrate value that can be understood by the public sector more widely.

The following diagram describes the approach envisaged by the baseline study:



The report made the following recommendations:

- Visions should be collaboratively developed, focused and properly communicated.
- Community segmentation should increasingly focus on behavioural segments; delivery should focus on delivery of service experiences in addition to products.
- The potential impact of organisational transformation on staff must be recognised, and effective communication and engagement processes must be put in place to ensure ownership.
- External communications should be creative and carefully targeted, in addition to provision of generic service information.
- Community engagement plans should be more robust, with an emphasis on monitoring progress.

### Evaluation study (June 2010)

The key findings of the research were structured in terms of evidence of impact. This included **the impact of community engagement** on the following areas:

- Library perceptions
  - User experience
  - Quality of standards
  - New centres mean new users
  - Younger audiences
  - Changing and positive staff perceptions
- Workforce development
  - Mixed views of staff – traditional library v community engagement
  - Changes have encouraged some to leave – opportunity for change
  - Community development staff key for some groups
- Partnership working
  - Existing partnerships strengthened
  - New partnerships formed (VCS)
- Learning and skills
  - Can be centres of wider community based learning and skills
  - Expectations of improved levels of educational attainment

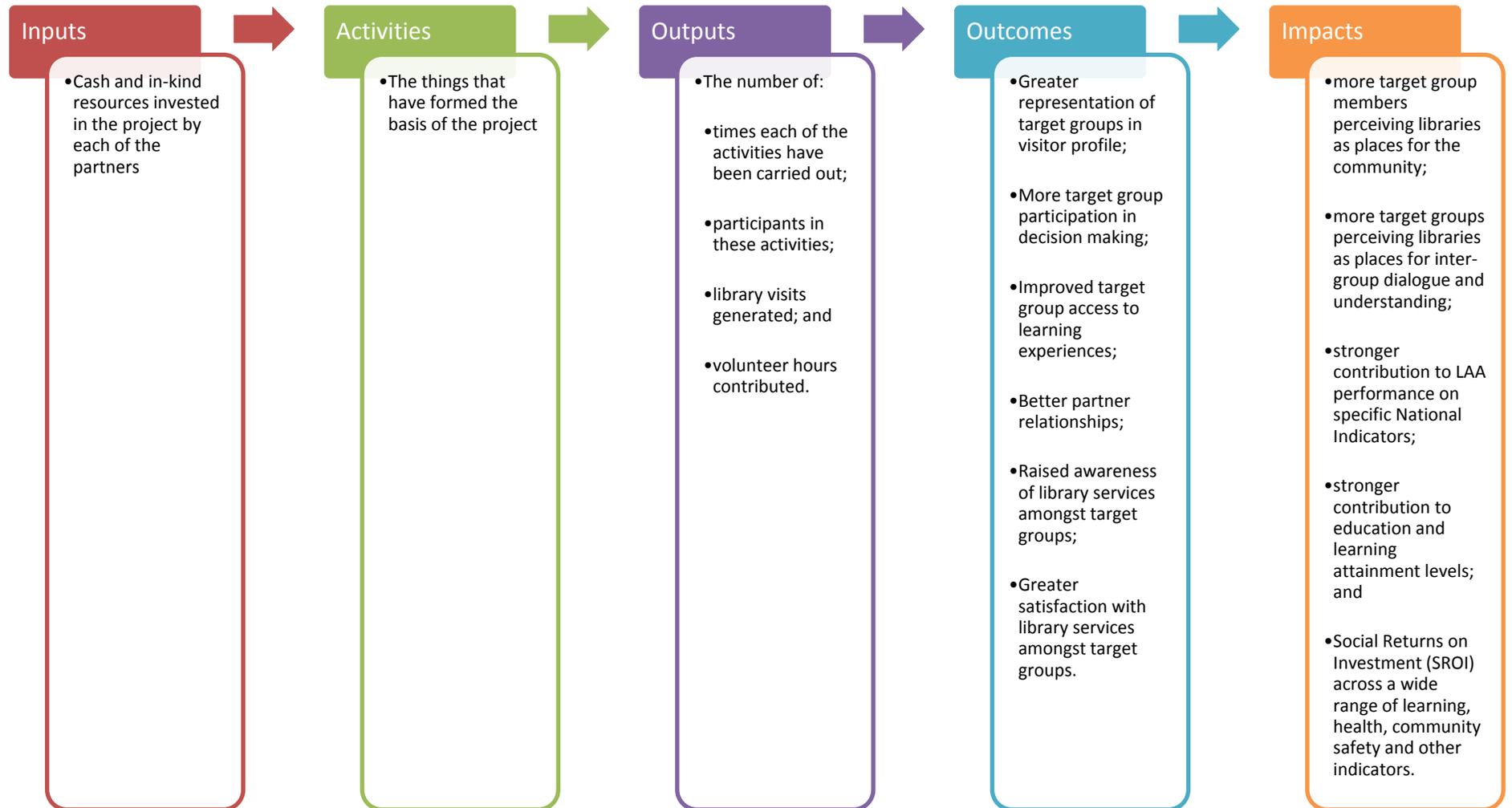
- CYP increased usage of libraries – encouraged learning/ positive activities
- Examples of SROI for work with children
- Improved skills
- Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) are significant in most cases
- Wellbeing
  - Examples of SROI in terms of mental health
  - Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) are significant in most cases
- Volunteering
  - Varied volunteering opportunities (Lancs. is best)
  - Volunteering has supported skills development
  - Volunteering roles have changed/ developed
  - Volunteer recruitment is ad hoc not strategic
- Contributing to National Indicators
  - Getting buy-in from LAs is a challenge
  - Impact on Nis – 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 13, 110

There were also a number of findings around sustaining the community engagement:

- Leveraging additional investment has boosted value of the Programme to just over £100m
- Capital investment from other sources has been used to sustain effect
- Local communities are not yet helping to manage operations
- There is a great deal of complexity in delivering community benefits through the development of ambitious schemes
- There is some evidence of targeting community segments
- Library staff have not always felt equipped to carry out community engagement work

As well as coming to the above broad concluding areas, the study used a **logic chain** to understand the process of change within libraries during the course of the programme. This logic chain provided the evaluation framework for that evaluation.

## Logic chain



## Research Questions

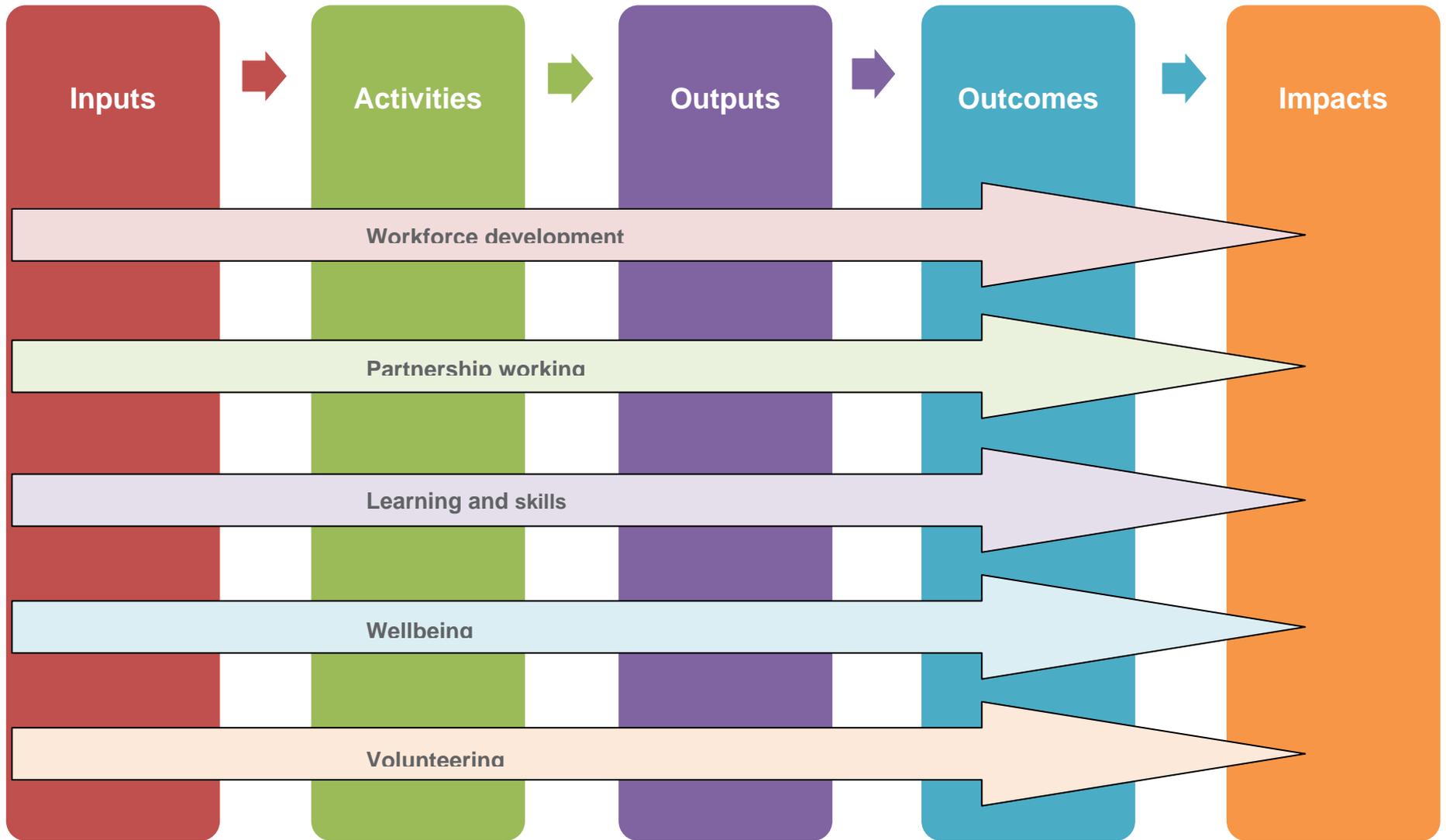
Given this previous research and the conceptual frameworks that have already been used to conduct research and consider impacts, it was essential that this study worked with and reflected these existing structures. The slightly different research questions, however, did require a different focus for the study.

The key research questions of this study, therefore, were:

- What are the evidenced outcomes of the community engagement activities of individual libraries in terms of the key lines of inquiry:
  - workforce development
  - partnership working
  - learning and skills
  - wellbeing
  - volunteering
  - Sustaining and advancing community engagement
- What is the theory of change across the logic chain which explains how outcomes were delivered, or missed, in individual libraries?
- What are the key factors across the programme which contributes to the achievement of community engagement and empowerment outcomes?
- What work are individual libraries doing to sustain this work at a time of reducing resources across the public sector?
- How can the learning from the programme best support future policy direction, both in and beyond the library sector?

Given these questions, it was important to build on the existing logic chain, and slightly amend the evaluation framework for this study in a way which uses the key lines of enquiry to understand what the changes were and how they explained a changing circumstance in an individual library or number of libraries. As a very simplistic and unrealistic example; did a particular kind of workforce development input and activity, create a volunteering output and then a wellbeing impact? This kind of process and understanding needed to be done to fill in some of the gaps between each of the boxes on the logic chain.

**Evaluation Framework**



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