

**Moray Council – report of a visit on 31st May 2012 by
the Scottish Library and Information Council**

Summary

The Moray Council Library Service's staff used the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix (PLQIM) to review its provision across Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences and QI 7 Leadership. From detailed discussions with staff, the public and a wide range of stakeholders; visits to libraries; and a review of the evidence, it is clear that the staff are strongly committed to developing a range of services and publicising them well in all parts of the community.

Aspects of the Library Service are clearly excellent and there is effective practice which will be helpful to disseminate widely. Key strengths lie in the clarity of vision and the range of robust policies which set a clear direction for staff. Staff skills are highly valued and well developed, with their training needs a strong priority for the sustainability of the service and the support for the local people. There is a clear planning framework linked to important local and national targets.

The library facilities are very conducive to learning and some of these are excellent. The quality of the learning is extremely important and the rigorous accreditation systems of SQA, Skills Development Scotland and the British Computer Society underpin the service. Learning programmes are varied and linked to ILAs which help to fund the learning centre staff.

Communication has been good and effective team-working has been created as a result. Staff are enthusiastic and committed and their wider involvement in cross-service working groups will offer them new opportunities. Excellent practice includes *Get Moray Reading*, Job Clubs and the on-going work to develop service for older people. Other important strengths include partnership working with communities which is embedded in practice over a number of years and excellent partnerships with volunteers who add value by giving their time to the extent which staff are unable to do.

Leadership is extremely strong and staff are very well supported. There is a very strong atmosphere of collaboration, team working and cooperation which will help sustain the service as further change and innovation take place.

As part of the Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix, staff have identified a number of areas for improvement and this will form the basis of an action plan on which to build better services. These include maintaining appropriate levels of support for book purchasing and introducing new services like e-books. The Service also needs to continue to develop the use of web 2.0, and the website and engaging with Young People, non-users and users to develop services.

Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences	
<i>Extent to which the environment stimulates and motivates learners</i>	Excellent

<i>The range of learning opportunities</i>	Excellent
<i>Provision for learners with differing abilities and aptitudes</i>	Excellent
<i>Partnerships enabling progression with others</i>	Excellent

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

Levels

This report uses a six level scale, as follows:

- excellent – outstanding, sector leading
- very good – major strengths
- good – important strengths with areas for improvement
- satisfactory – strengths just outweigh weaknesses
- weak – important weaknesses
- unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

Introduction

Sited in all types of communities and with extensive mobile library service provision, libraries remain one of the free universal services for communities where the population can visit as individuals or in groups to pursue reading for pleasure, learning or hobbies. Libraries can support the business community, individual and community information needs and are inclusive of all age and social groups, nationalities, genders and religious beliefs. The delivery of high quality information and library services to individuals and communities helps people to develop their skills, realise their aspirations and contribute to the economic growth and well-being of the country. Libraries encourage the use of digital technologies by communities and individuals by providing access to information, learning and culture.

The first public library legislation in Scotland was passed in 1853 and the base legislation is the 1887 Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act, and so local authorities have a statutory duty to secure the provision of adequate library services for all persons resident in their area. Library services make a significant contribution to delivering the Scottish Government's five strategic priorities, as well as local council and community planning objectives.

Background

Located on the north east coast of Scotland, Moray is a largely rural authority with low unemployment. A picturesque part of Scotland, Moray is famed for its malt whisky and beautiful coastline. Much of the countryside is very sparsely populated and the area includes part of the Cairngorm mountain range. This poses challenges for service delivery with some routes inaccessible for periods of the year and pressures to sustain services to small, geographically isolated communities. Three-quarters of the population of 87,000 live in or around the five main centres of Elgin, Forres, Keith, Buckie and Lossiemouth. There are, in

addition, specific areas of deprivation within Elgin and Buckie, as well as the demographic challenges of an ageing population.

Whilst some communities are relatively prosperous, there are also significant concerns about the area's future. Traditional sources of employment are in decline and one of the local RAF bases will close. With the lowest average pay and one of the least qualified workforces in Scotland, the Community Planning Partnership is developing new strategies for diversifying the narrow economic base, in which heritage and tourism are two of the five key themes. With continuing support from the Council, Libraries are well positioned to make a significant contribution to skills development, heritage and other Council and Community Planning priorities.

A restructure is taking place and libraries will be part of a Lifelong Learning, Culture and Sport section. The Libraries Service has developed a service plan for 2012-2015. There are 15 libraries with free Internet access, a Local Heritage Centre and 2 mobile libraries, all with disabled access. Elgin Library is a learndirect centre, offering a high quality of accredited courses, and is an excellent example of the role which libraries can play in supporting personal development and encouraging economic growth. There are a further 6 learning centres and 7 smaller learning points. Audit Scotland's report of 2006 notes that 'the proportion of the local population using the local libraries is one of the highest in Scotland. Similarly, there are high numbers using learning centres and access points.' A Public Service Improvement Framework evaluation carried out in 2010 found that Libraries and Information Services are a very high performing and efficient service. The 2010/11 budget necessitated a 13% reduction in allocation and considerable service change in staffing and opening hours and with the loss of a mobile library following the previous deletion of the Education Resource Service. The book fund has been reduced by 25% over a five year period. During 2010-2011 the Libraries Integration Programme managed the transfer of 6 stand alone part-time libraries to 5 local primary schools and 1 secondary school to achieve integrated libraries and learning centres, the complete renovation of 1 stand alone library and the upgrading of a principal library with the support of European Funding.

The most recent PLQIM assessment took place in June 2011 and the Quality Indicator assessed on that occasion were 3 Meeting readers' needs which indicated clearly excellent practice and was rated as 6 Excellent across the themes and 5 Ethos and Values which was rated as 5 Very Good across the themes.

Process

Building on success: a public library quality improvement matrix self evaluation toolkit, prepared by the Scottish Library and Information Council (SLIC) provides the framework for the process Moray Council Library Staff chose to look at Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences and Quality Indicator 7 Leadership. Staff worked together to identify and evaluate evidence about the impact and outcomes and their findings were presented to SLIC. The visiting team were impressed both with the staff who carried out and presented their assessment and the senior managers who supported the staff during the process.

Peer verifiers, Richard Aird, Senior Officer (Libraries) West Dunbartonshire Council and Alana Ward Libraries and Museums Manager, Inverclyde Council, led the visit supported by SLIC officers. The team reviewed the evidence and carried out discussions with members of staff, a wide variety of partners, the public and the management team on 31st May 2012. Visits were made to Buckie Library, Elgin Library and Milne's Learning Centre in Fochabers.

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

Quality Indicator 4 Learners' experiences

Strengths

- Excellent learning programme
- Stimulating learning spaces in libraries, across the strategically placed network, with some excellent facilities
- Good broadband networks and wi-fi to extend capacity
- Extensive range of courses linked to ILAs
- Accredited centres
- Highly trained and motivated Learning Centre Coordinator and Advisors
- Widely shared understanding of the contribution all library staff can make to learning
- Excellent range of partnerships in place
- Income generation and sustainability through the use of ILAs
- Job Clubs
- Learning programmes for vulnerable groups and older people
- Informal learning opportunities like Get Moray Reading

The library learning environment

Library staff plan the design and layout of library spaces to stimulate and motivate learning. Many learning opportunities are staff led, but others are partner-provided where appropriate. The libraries are a strategically placed network, which is well-spread out across the region. Policies and staff development are developed with customers and staff so that they are tailored appropriately. Customer service standards have been in place for a number of years and are embedded.

The Moray Lifelong Learning Forum Strategic Group coordinate the development and delivery across the various partners, reporting directly to the Community Planning Partnership and linking into the Council Plan and reporting.

The Milne's Learning Centre at Fochabers is the newest development with excellent facilities. It is co-located with the high school and offers improved facilities, with good connectivity, new IT and a selection of attractive learning and study spaces for school pupils and the public. Elgin Library incorporates a very attractive gallery and a cafe overlooking the park. It also houses the library headquarters, a private room for the remote passport service and the tourist information service. A fully-accredited learndirect centre is located on the first floor and it provides excellent facilities for learners, whether it is for the purposes of homework, study or qualifications. This includes a rolling replacement programme of all computers over a three year period and 1000 MB connection. The regular Job Club was taking place and the team were able to observe the staff interactions with members of the group. Buckie Library is an older building and planning a redevelopment to integrate college services. It is a long building with a series of extended rooms, offering privacy and increasing opportunity for dedicated study/formal classes. The SLIC team have visited a number of other service points in recent years and are aware that the investment in 2010/11 has resulted in the upgrading of some libraries but that some spaces are not as flexible as others. Grant Lodge provides another opportunity for development of a specialist local studies centre and wider visitor experience.

Range of learning

There is an extensive programme of learning opportunities and the staff aim to take the fear away about returning to learning. Activities are intended to provide short, fun information literacy and computer activities. The Winter Events brochure lays out the range from IT taster sessions to family history events. The service recorded 688 learning events in the 12 libraries in the last 12 months. The earliest learning begins with Bookbug and baby rhymetime which attract over 1500 attendees and 476 Bookbug Library Challenge certificates have been presented. Guidelines are provided for planning group visits by schools and young people, in order to make the most of library services to support their learning. Partnerships include skills development with Essential Skills clients, Quarriers, Barnardos and ESOL learners. Scottish Government Public Library Quality Improvement funding has been secured for learning programmes for the over 60s to encourage digital participation and this has already attracted over 200 learners. The learners have been presented with certificates and 54 have registered for accredited learning courses as a direct result.

There is extensive use of ILA funding to provide a steady stream of income to the service to employ specialist staffing. These staff provide leadership, co-ordination, quality control and ensure that the pace and level of learning is appropriate for learners. They develop support materials and work with volunteers to ensure that learners' are well-supported. Learners' progress is tracked for performance measurement. All learners are invited to complete evaluation forms and this dataset is reviewed regularly. Staff are well trained and this is an integral part of the Employee Development and Review process. Quarterly development days are held for staff and their needs are the basis of the service's training and development plan. When changes to the ILA took place recently learning programmes were reviewed and changed so that learners were still able to access the funding support. There are 480 learners who have recently taken part or are taking part in PC Passport qualifications. The European Computer Driving Licence is popular and learners can pursue this in self-directed study, with the opportunity to sit the test if they wish. Learning is accredited by SQA and the British Computer Society. BCS audit every three years and ILA Scotland also carries out regular audits to ensure both quality and probity.

A Job Club has been introduced at Elgin Library to aid the development of employability skills. Staff and volunteers work in privacy with a small group to create CVs, demonstrate online recruitment sites, promote vacancies supplied by the local Job Centre and support job seekers as they complete online applications. Partners provide back-up when needed and this has led to other learning programmes, such as Construction Skills Certification. In addition to the formal learning, there is a lot of informal learning through Get Moray Reading, volunteering, homework help and the friendships which have developed through attendance at classes and events.

Printed marketing materials and website information are attractive, in clear English and well presented. Feedback indicates that the best marketing tool the service has is the reputation it has gained by word of mouth from successful learners in communities.

Successful learning is publicly celebrated in events, including one in partnership with the Adult Learning Partnership and on the day of the visit 7 staff members who had completed a Professional Development Award in Applications of ICT in Libraries were presented with certificates at a lunch meeting with library partners.

Addressing the needs of learners

The Council's Equality Strategy is the core policy and the ethos of inclusion and accessibility is very strongly led. Partnership working enables libraries in small communities to be made available to learning groups outside normal library opening hours. Adult literacies learners are able to participate in the Six Book Challenge with libraries and the Moray Adult Learning Partnership. The service takes part in Get Ready for Work and provides work placements. Bibliotherapy and Health Matters collections are offered as reading is seen as a healing and wellbeing activity. Staff training needs are identified and Ability Net, disability and special needs training have all been carried out. Library staff provide ICT training for other council staff and the strengths of the library staff skills in leading ICT training has led to delivery of courses for varied audiences including 16+ skills, over 60's and addiction recovery groups. Partnerships also include LEAD Scotland and the Older People's Information Co-ordinator, Annie Scott, was able to describe the impact the library service has on her groups and individuals.

Partnership working in learning

There are clearly very well developed and wide-ranging partnerships which share different aspects – sometimes it is staff expertise, resources or facilities; this is linked to the recommendations of the Christie Commission. All of the provision is driven by the Single Outcome Agreement and within the framework of the Community Planning Partnership. The aspiration is seamless progression for learners. Current provision is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is still relevant. Income from ILAs and other sources funds 2.5 FTE staff posts which ensure quality, consistency and sustainability.

Partnerships include criminal justice, the Richmond Fellowship, community care, Skills Development Scotland and libraries are taking on a trainee under the Get Ready for Work scheme. There were 20 trainees in the Job Club and 15 of them have been helped into work or training as a result. About 85 people attended events at libraries to promote opportunities through Job Clubs. Volunteers are used effectively and are recruited so that their interests and abilities are matched to the tasks available. For example, volunteers with a background in recruitment were specifically sourced to help with the Job Clubs. Staff are the mainstay and continuity and provide help and advice for volunteers who have the skills to assist this group.

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to seek new programmes and partnerships linked to the delivery of Council priorities in Single Outcome Agreement

Quality Indicator 7 Leadership

Strengths

- Vision and mission are succinct, memorable and promoted
- Robust policy foundation
- Clear planning framework linked to local and national target setting
- Excellent use of performance information
- Staff initiatives across a range of services, including reading activities, displays and use of web 2.0
- Clear vision with outcomes linked to SOAs at service level and specific targets
- Wide range of nationally-recognised innovation
- Embedded self-evaluation processes supported by feedback from service users, staff and stakeholders including lapsed and non-users of the service.
- Library profiles providing information and development progress of each individual

library

- Effective partnership working used to raise libraries' profile with members and other
- Stakeholders
- ICT projects and staff ICT skills
- Changes to book procurement and stock management
- Communications strategy
- Carefully planned improvement with support for staff skills development
- Collaborative staff approach and effective teamworking
- Well organised partnership with volunteers
- Staff at all levels involved in the continuous improvement process
- Good leadership and supportive management of change

Vision and policy making

The vision and mission are clearly expressed and the recruitment and development of staff is of paramount importance. The vision for the service is on the Moray Council website and the mission is *Learning to Live, Living to Learn*. The aims are *Inspire, Include and Improve*. The policy foundation is very strong and 13 are publicly available on the Moray Council website. Performance information is also published. This means that it is very clear to the public, staff and stakeholders exactly what the library service is there to do, how it will carry out its functions and what the expectations of staff are. A consultation strategy is in place to carry out a survey every two years of users, lapsed users and non-users. There are clear links across plans. The shared drive provides a central location for documents, policies and for collaborative working. Minutes of meetings are shared, except for those of a confidential nature. Communication is varied with some 1:1s, face to face meetings of senior managers and various staff groups, emails and print communication. The shared drive is relatively new and access varies. Facebook is being used by Moray Council Libraries and Museums. The Communication Strategy was recently highlighted in the Public Services Improvement Framework assessment as good practice.

Planning for improvement

The Community Planning Partnership sets the high-level planning objectives and customer feedback is also taken into account. An example is the survey of opening hours at Dufftown. Partners also bring their own knowledgebase from which libraries can draw when planning provision. There are community, stock and information profiles for all communities. The surveys also help to supply knowledge of the appetite of potential users for services, underpinned by a strong collection of policies and procedures.

Libraries user supplier selection and use Cascade, e-books and evidence based stock selection. SmartSM, the evidence based stock management was recently funded by the Scottish Government Public Library Quality Improvement fund. The stock check has recently been completed and reports on stock and transfers are run regularly. It is important to complete this regularly as it takes time to embed processes locally and results should always be fed back to staff so that they can see the impact of the changes.

Get Moray Reading is now in its fourth year and each year brings new opportunities to adapt and develop a successful format. The two mobile libraries are well used with around 1600 users. The volunteers are well used and are publicly recognised by the Council for their contribution in a rewards ceremony. The housebound, elderly, vulnerable and those in social or physical isolation depend on a connection with libraries as a keystone of their interaction with the Council. Online services are being expanded but, for many, libraries are the interface with the Council. The feedback from all initiatives is assiduously recorded and responded to. Performance measurement is very strong and using frameworks like the

Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix sets a review cycle which keeps the service on track and stakeholders informed.

Innovation

There has been radical change to the service in recent years. This includes a 50% decrease in library support staff and 6 professional posts have been deleted. This has led to a review of back-office processes to streamline business. A good example is the implementation of full EDI which greatly reduces procurement administration. Starting from the People's Network ICT training, the senior managers have sought to adopt new ways of working and embrace change and innovation. Staff have developed not just new skills sets but a new business approach, particularly in the provision of learning which is largely ILA funded. An annual ICT action plan keeps these skills current and it is updated monthly so that staff are able to respond to changing customer demand and advances in technology. Elgin Library is a remote passport office and generates income through the provision of this service. The rural nature of Moray brought about this opportunity, but services need to be connected to partners to seek out opportunities like this and work to implement successful new business strands.

Staff are key to embedding innovation and are confident about their views being listened to, as well as their ideas welcomed by managers. One member of staff summed up the service by saying 'It's a collective'. They recognise that not all ideas are 'timely' and can be adopted and appreciate the feedback from senior managers about the practical, funding or policy reasons behind their decisions.

Innovation and success is very well recognised. The shared drive helps to publicise new developments and success. Its use by staff is still growing but a recently staff survey had a 100% completion rate.

Management of change

The library service is becoming more community focused and less facilities based. The introduction of online services has been a significant change for libraries. The latest in these is e-books. The new service means that library members can download e-books outside library opening hours via the library catalogue on the website. This adds to reference and information services like MORINFO, the community information website.

The service has moved away from the passive provision of resources and is dynamically engaged in developing intergenerational learning activities, working with the Community Care Partnership. New developments are actively sought and the Change Fund and the Scottish Government Public Library Improvement Fund have been used, for example, to support change. The latest partnership is the Council's license for a new online reminiscence tool and libraries are one of the four licensees. Grant Lodge offers potential for a significant heritage development and new partnerships will be sought to help to exploit its full potential.

There is formal and informal mentoring. Basic service is as important to the team as innovation and a new programme of refresher training is taking place. When questioned, staff responded that this was seen as a positive and encouraging reinforcement of skills and procedures, which increased their confidence.

Targets are set locally in partnership with staff and these are measured every month. The Service Development meetings review performance regularly and the monitoring of the implementation of change is a key factor in the service's success.

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to advocate within the Council and partnerships for support to match customers' needs
- Seek further opportunities to involve staff in policy-making
- Share good practice across all staff
- Use the library profiles to their full potential

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June 2012