



**Moray Council – report of a visit on 21st June 2011 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 3 Meeting readers’ needs and QI 5 Ethos and values. 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 meeting readers’ needs, with the Service performing very well in its ethos and values. These include strong leadership with creative approaches to developing reader-centred services and to partnership working, *Get Moray Reading*, reader development specialist training and a wide range of reading groups, including specialist groups. There are well developed strategies, policies, procedures and accompanying programmes, which are regularly reviewed, and these ensure that staff understand their roles and there is consistency across service points. Other important strengths include the implementation of evidence based stock management, a wide range of partnerships to jointly promote reading and to target hard to reach audiences, good outreach work and high levels of performance in quantitative indicators.

In the second indicator, Ethos and values, key strengths are inclusive, customer centred services, the Strategy for Services to Older people and the good use of community planning which resulted in the successful integration of six libraries into local schools. Other important strengths include a high quality of promotion and display work, a strategic approach to customer care and high standards of accessibility.

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 3 Meeting readers’ needs | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Identification of reading interests</i> | Excellent |
| <i>Choice of activities and resources</i> | Excellent |
| <i>Provision for readers with differing abilities and aptitudes</i> | Excellent |

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

Levels

This report uses a six level scale, as follows:

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

Introduction

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

The Council restructured in April 2011 and libraries now sit within an Education and Social Care department, with reporting through the Head of Resources as before. There are 15 libraries with free Internet access 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, with the loss of a mobile library and the deletion of the Education Resource Service. The bookfund 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 was completed with European Funding.

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 3 Meeting reader's needs and Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values. Staff worked together to identify and evaluate evidence about the impact and outcomes and their findings were presented to SLIC.

Working with the help of a peer verifier, Dorothy Browse, Fife Council, SLIC reviewed the evidence and carried out discussions with members of staff, a wide variety of partners, the public and the management team on 21st June 2011. Visits were made to Hopeman, which is one of the recently integrated libraries within a primary school, 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 3 Meeting readers' needs

Strengths

- Strong leadership which supports the development of a reader-centred approach
- Well developed strategies, policies, procedures and accompanying programmes which are regularly reviewed
- Get Moray Reading
- Reader development specialist training
- Wide range of reading groups, including specialist groups
- Reader engagement with staff and reader to reader
- Implementation of evidence based stock management
- Wide range of partnerships to jointly promote reading to target hard to reach audiences
- Wide range of events and activities, including well-targeted outreach work
- High levels of performance in quantitative indicators
- Reader-centred approach embedded in staff training programme with ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- Use of retail techniques in promotion and display

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High quality of promotional materials• Provision for those with differing needs to access reading |
|--|

Identification of reading needs

The library service aims to allow readers, across age groups, ability levels and with all forms of disability to enjoy reading. Library staff are proud of their knowledge of their customers' interests. This is built up from a wide range of documentation, experience and interaction.

Moray Libraries and Information Services are underpinned by a range of well-developed policies and strategies, and these are regularly reviewed. The Service Improvement Plan takes forward the results of previous Public Library Quality Improvement Matrix self evaluations and community libraries have their own action plans. The Reader Development Strategy sets the direction for the Service and is annually reviewed, as is the associated Reader Development Programme, which covers reading promotions, Get Moray Reading and author events. Community profiles have been produced for all libraries and this builds up a picture of customers at local level. Feedback and requests are analysed with clear links to actions in other plans. Stock profiles have been developed and a programme of exchanges put in place to regularly refresh the most popular items.

The Service has a contract with Askews for general reading materials and this offers value for money as well as high levels of service. Local bookshop Yeadons, Elgin's independent bookseller, supply all the local material and specialist material which cannot be sourced from the main contractor. This arrangement results in high standards of supply with quick response times.

Staff understand the importance of each aspect and stock appropriate to the interests of each community library is available in a condition and quantity which is acceptable. The reductions to the book fund have had an impact on stock. Whilst the Service is using a range of tools, like evidence based stock management to minimise the impact on the library customer, regular investment in new reading material lies at the heart of excellent library services so it is important that the existing levels are maintained.

Standards and guidelines have been developed for younger readers 0-14 and 14-18 and have been implemented. One area which has already been identified for action is the need to establish a Young People's Focus Group as part of the Consultation Strategy.

The analysis of performance is rigorous. The service has recently joined the Scottish consortium, SmartLINK, who are working together on the introduction of evidence based stock management software, SmartSM. This uses the library information management system to identify trends in reading demand and also trigger points for intervention with heavily used stock, low-use items and stock which might be successfully exchanged with other libraries to generate more issues. This all contributes to ensuring that all the books purchased will attract readers, whilst a balance is kept for requests and specialist interest items. Other performance information helps to determine when people visit libraries and borrow most heavily, which informs opening hours and staffing levels. The Mini-Leap evaluation tool is used to make decisions about new ventures, projects or promotions and this is used effectively. Performance targets are set for individual community libraries. Every year each library sets its performance targets for the coming year. These targets are based on previous years' results and are meant to be realistic but challenging and all staff are involved in this process.

There is a strong management lead on the importance of reading and book lending, within a service that is highly successful in other aspects, as well as good utilisation of available tools, staff training and good marketing and promotion.

The Lending Services Co-ordinator supports reader development initiatives for all libraries. She has been pivotal in developing a reader-centred approach to displays, promotions and other reading related activities through a staff training programme and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. She is involved in national initiatives which help to keep staff informed and aware of best practice.

Staff training makes a vital contribution to the excellence of Moray's performance in this indicator. There is a training programme for reader development, promotion and display work. Other, more specialist, training is undertaken by a small number of people and cascaded so that all staff can benefit from it. Staff training and development needs are identified and assessed on an ongoing basis to meet service requirements as well as to respond to the need to deliver national and local reading and customer initiatives. Involvement in themed working groups such as Children's Working Group and Book Festival Working Group supports staff to further develop their awareness of reader related skills and knowledge.

Staff support and awareness is provided through the monthly circulation of Top Ten lists. Shelf shouters, headers for themed collections, reader development newsletter, ongoing author and book news are circulated by email and relevant news highlighted on the Reading Room area of the Moray Council website. Using ICT to improve reader development skills is further improved by the SQA's Professional Development Award (PDA) Applications of ICT in Libraries, which around 15 staff have either completed or are in process of completing. As a result, Moray library staff are confident about talking to their customers about reading and the range of choices which are open to customers. Their knowledge of reading was discussed by the visiting team who were impressed with their levels of awareness. A staff reading group has been introduced and the staff are fully aware of the importance of challenging readers to try new genres or authors so that their experience develops. This helps staff to find out about different writing styles and genres and they are then able to easily advise customers on further reading.

Choice of activities and resources

The Reader Development Strategy is the rationale for the annual programme of events and activities. Libraries and staff have access to support materials to promote books and reading and use reader development training to engage with the public to offer opportunities to share reading experiences and widen their reading choices. This adds value to the experience for the customer. One of the areas of strength is the use of retail techniques in promotion and display.

The Reader Development Programme helps the Service to plan marketing and publicity campaigns to ensure involvement with both national and local initiatives that cover a wide range of readers' interests. Pressure on staff capacity and budgets mean that support has to be prioritised and this is done on an annual basis. Libraries staff attend community events to reach out to readers and non-readers and these include the Findochty School Fete, the Hopeman Gala, the Keith Show, the Lossiemouth Family Fun Day, Marafun and Motorfun. Irrespective of the event, staff are clear that their aim remains the same: to ensure that the people of Moray are aware of what their library service can do for them. National campaigns, with the benefits of wider publicity, are also supported and these include the Royal Mail Awards, the BBC Audio Challenge, the Six Books Challenge and World Book Day.

Moray Libraries follow a programme of planned class and nursery visits aimed at introducing and fostering a love of reading and books. Libraries also host frequent visits by community groups such as Brownies, Cub Scouts, Scottish Women's Institutes and Rotary Clubs. There are 21 reading groups for adults, older people and children where discussion and debate about books is encouraged. The five junior groups are fairly new and these groups will evolve and expand into teen groups when ready. One book group, formed under Essential Skills, is made up of less able readers and are tackling the Six Book Challenge. The majority, however, read a wide range of titles and are a well established part of library life. Group members' comments and suggestions are taken on board and feedback is always welcome.

The Senior Librarian – Forres provides advice and support on children's reading and activities and has established a working group to assist in the preparation of promotional and support materials for staff and customers. Parents and carers are targeted through school fetes, galas and parents' evenings and children are introduced to libraries at an early age. There is a particularly strong improvement in the children's fiction issues and one factor may be the Summer Reading Challenge, which seeks to continue to encourage reading over the school holiday. In Moray a quarter of the eligible population takes part and nearly two thirds complete the challenge, one of the best outcomes in the country. Summer 2010's Space Hop attracted 1556 participants with nearly two-thirds completing the task. Comments from parents and carers are very positive and indicate that their children read during the holidays more as a result of the Challenge. Moray schools contribute to the funding of the Summer Reading Challenge in recognition of the impact of that initiative in developing children's reading levels.

During National Family Week, libraries across Moray offered various events including storytimes, treasure hunts, family history taster sessions and quizzes. Feedback from staff includes 'On family week we had more children visiting the library to do the quiz and get the sticker'.

Provision for readers

Performance is of a high standard against a range of measures including 90% Bookbug pack distribution, 25% of the population are active borrowers which compares well against a national average of 20.5%¹ (the 3rd highest in Scotland) and Moray lie 4th in the table of CIPFA public library statistics 2007/8 for book lending in Scotland, with issues rising in some places. Beneath these headline figures lie a range of qualitative indicators with special collections for targeted groups; 5 healthy reading collections developed with health and social care partnerships, a graphic novel collection and free spoken word collections for children and the visually impaired. There is potential to extend these collections to additional libraries and to introduce further themed collections, such as Diabetes, Heart Conditions and Stroke Awareness.

Large Print and spoken word collections are shelved separately for ease of access. The borrowing of all formats is free for those who are housebound or have a disability and for a range of other concessionary groups such as teaching staff, playgroups, homes and hospitals, home educators and other groups of specific need. Quick Reads collections are available and libraries work in partnership with Essential Skills' staff to support literacy initiatives such as Six Book Challenge and to provide suitable reading materials for their literacy learners. There are dual-language materials for young children in those languages determined by the migrant population in Moray and libraries work closely with ESOL

¹ Audit Scotland 2008/9 Statutory Performance Indicators

providers to support access to information, and learning as well as acting as a referral point for those requiring tutoring on English.

All area libraries have Parent and Child collections and representation on the Parenting Strategy Group and the Healthy & Active Childcare Group has led to increased involvement with childminders and resulted in the provision of collections of materials for use with the children in their care.

Moray Council staff were recently targeted by the Books for Busy People campaign which provided a lunch-time library for HQ staff. An email was sent to every Moray Council employee to inform them of this initiative and this led to new members, books borrowed and the opportunity to demonstrate the use of the online catalogue and request service. This has resulted in positive feedback and is a potential area for growth with the development of the new Council campus.

Library volunteers support a range of reading activities that add value to the services offered, such as collation of Bookbug packs, assisting with book sales, support roles at children's activities and storytimes and meeting and leading school classes to author events during the book festival.

Partnerships with the private sector bring sponsorship and funding, including the annual Book festival and Inter-Schools Quiz, providing author events, shared promotion and access routes to specialist publishers and their authors.

Following the reduction from 3 mobile vehicles to 2, the mobile library service was reviewed in 2010 and key priorities defined, providing a targeted service to the housebound, elderly, remote schools and those in greatest need. Some 35% of the mobile library users also used the static libraries and online service use has been growing with active promotion. Readers can access the library catalogue through the availability of OPACs in all libraries and from a shortcut on all public access computers. Talis Prism is available from the front page of the Moray Council website. The percentage of online requests and renewals has been steadily increasing each year and the number of written request cards is on the decrease. This has also led to a significant improvement in the time taken to satisfy requests.

Shared training is available with the Moray Adult Literacies Partnership (MALP), for example, the week long Read to Lead training run by the Reader Organisation, staff have been trained in PDA ITALL and have participated in Dyslexia awareness. MALP involves a range of partners including Moray College, Essential Skills, LEAD, Skills Development Scotland, Job Centre Plus, NHS Grampian, ESOL, Community Support Unit and Libraries. This offers opportunities for referrals as well as joint projects. Libraries are also involved in MALP's sub-group on Youth Literacies.

Areas for Improvement

- Maintain appropriate levels of investment in library stock
- Young People's Focus Group
- Continue to develop use of web 2.0 and website
- Develop e-book services
- Continue to engage with non-users and users to develop services
- Continue to implement use of evidence based stock management
- Continue to develop events and activities, especially those aimed at families and building the audience for *Get Moray Reading*

Quality Indicator 5 Ethos and values

Strengths

- Strong leadership with creative approach to partnership working
- Inclusive, customer centred services
- Strategy for Services to Older people, including Action Plan and Marketing Plan
- Good use of community planning
- Integration of six libraries into local schools
- Attractive promotion and display
- Strategic approach to customer care and Customer Service Standards
- High standards of accessibility and availability of adaptive technologies
- Staff training in disability awareness and ITALL

Sense of identity

The objectives and activities of the Service support the Moray Council and Community Planning priorities. The Service has effective involvement in community planning and participation in key council/community planning events. Considerable efforts have been made over the years to establishing a good relationship with the public and frequent consultations have resulted in tailored service provision for local people, as well as high levels of community support. This support and understanding of customers' needs was important when significant changes took place with the integration of five libraries into Primary Schools and one into a High School. All of these libraries are run to public library standards. The investment in these libraries, and in self-service, has led to increased access opportunities; use by partners and strengthened support from community groups, such as Burghead Community Council. Libraries are good community facilities for use as council information resource points and for council consultations, such as Flood Alleviation and budget details. There is inter-departmental and inter-service working to avoid duplication of resources such as Health partnerships and Community Learning & Development partnerships. Space for community groups depends on the space available but libraries make every effort to ensure that accommodation is provided on request.

The Service has a comprehensive Consultation Strategy with a wide range of feedback mechanisms, including a 24/7 online service and public meetings. It consults with users and non-users, individuals, groups and partners and provide regular feedback.

Libraries are actively involved in initiatives that engender civic pride and involvement including community events, galas, cultural and heritage initiatives. Libraries are recognised as key locations for community events and displays and the Gallery at Elgin Library provides a prominent space for local artists to showcase and sell their work. There is a high uptake of the library volunteering opportunities, with volunteers participating in activities ranging from helping with library events to indexing local heritage information. Volunteers speak highly of the opportunity to make a contribution to local community life and appreciate the clarity which the Volunteering Policy brings to their role.

The wide variety of activities, events and services demonstrate a commitment to inclusion. These range from ESOL learners, those with literacies learning needs, isolated and marginalised people and people with mental health difficulties. National and local initiatives are used to attract people to libraries. The libraries network and mobile routes address issues of rurality, services to older people and services to the housebound. Services are delivered to Old People's Homes and housebound individuals either via Mobile Libraries or WRVS Volunteers. Partnerships are well developed, which helps with individuals and groups who are harder to reach. Some partnerships are unique, for example the NHS Retirement

Fellowship, New Horizons – mental health group and Quarriers Carers. The Well project in Buckie was set up in an area of deprivation to encourage young mothers back into learning. The initial outreach computer courses led to the learners completing their courses at Buckie Library. Storytimes are run in community locations to reach non-users such as the St Giles Centre and the Moray Women's Refuge. The 'Side by Side' initiative to support less confident learners came in response to a suggestion from learners who needed additional mentoring support. Partnership working has provided work placements to those with a disability and to Secondary School students and work placements as part of Community Service orders.

Scotland is experiencing rapid growth in the percentage of older population and this is changing pressure on services. A Strategy for Services to Older people, including Action Plan and Marketing Plan has been developed and this has been identified in the service improvement plan 2011-12 as a key priority for the service. This is considered to be unique practice and will help inform the development of other library and information services. The Service is currently working with Community Care to create a joint post, enabled by Scottish Government "Change" funding, to promote and support activities for older people such as reading groups and ICT programmes; and to ensure that relevant, current information is available and effectively targeted to the needs of older people.

Reception and atmosphere

Staff are committed to the delivery of services in a neutral and welcoming environment. Joining packs and a library tour are offered to all new members. Supportive reception techniques are used both prior to and during a customer visit, promote the facilities and services and are aimed at putting the customers at ease. New library members are targeted from their earliest stages with visits to Registrars and Bookbug sessions. Library information is made available to local house builders, housing partnerships, schools enrolment meetings and transition events. Facilities are clearly guided so that they are well-used by their target groups and observation shows that users are comfortable within the library environment. All libraries visited had a good atmosphere with positive relationships between the staff and public.

The integration of the libraries into schools has provided an opportunity to upgrade some of the interiors. These are attractively laid out to high specifications. Reading areas are bright, well-organised and attractive. Many of them feature areas for reading newspapers, have specially created zones from bookshelving to give readers peace and privacy to read. Children's areas are created to encourage browsing with the use of specialist branding, children's library furniture and are within sight of library staff.

The visiting team were able to observe the public use of three libraries including parents and carers with toddlers, children and young people using the library independently out of class, learners following formal courses and adults browsing and reading newspapers and journals.

The signage and guiding in Moray Libraries ensure customers can find their way around with minimum assistance although assistance is always readily available. However, road signage is an area for improvement. The self service machines ensure that users can still issue and return items out with opening times and this is particularly useful in the Integrated Libraries for Schools use and for the groups already mentioned. Encouraging users to use this facility in the larger libraries releases staff from the desk and allows for better interaction with, and support to, the libraries' customers.

Customer Service

A customer centred ethos underpins the library service that understands and works in partnership with its customers and the community and in turn has widespread usage and support.

An aptitude for customer service is sought at recruitment level and continues to be developed and supported through induction training, staff development, organisational structure and succession planning. Customer Service Standards ethos and policy are incorporated into job descriptions, discussed at interview, and included in the appointment letter for newly employed staff. Key staff have specifically been selected by Employee Development to take customer skills qualifications Professional development includes blind awareness, deaf awareness and learning disability awareness. Staff have also attended Social Awareness sessions arranged by the Employee Development Service including Domestic Abuse, Discrimination, Child Protection, Race Awareness and Mental Health Awareness. The Abilitynet Remote Assessment Project for Scotland provided interactive online resources and kit to assist with PC setup for individuals' use of our PCs. Although funding for the project has now ceased, the knowledge and information gained is still used, optimising accessibility features on computers.

Customer Service Standards have been developed and the Service is working towards the Customer Service Excellence award. This will contribute to ensuring the uniformity and equality of service provision and staff support. The Customer Service Excellence working group uses mystery shoppers, surveys, staff briefings, checklists, and the customer focus group to inform practices. The Service regularly carries out a range of surveys and consultations and these include face to face, telephone and online, as well as the traditional suggestion boxes in libraries. To further improve the consultations a young people's focus group will commence later this year. Feedback from customers through the customer comments books is welcomed. These comments, with the action taken, are published quarterly and made available to the public in each library and on the libraries website.

As well as supportive policies and procedures for dealing with unacceptable behaviour there are clear customer guidelines for class and nursery visits with all staff participating having attended class visit/storytelling training.

Celebrating Success Strategy is in place to share the library service's success with customers, staff, partners, councillors, senior officers, and the wider public and to highlight the difference libraries make to so many people's lives and how services positively contribute to the council, community planning and national priorities.

Areas for Improvement

- Continue to embed customer care ethos across staff for consistency
- Continue to work towards Customer Service Excellence
- Seek opportunities for secure stakeholder support linked to investment
- Continue to seek external funding to support joint initiatives
- Continue to seek and respond to customer feedback and surveys
- Directional signage to libraries

Rhona Arthur, Assistant Director
Scottish Library and Information Council
August 2011