Community Libraries

Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities

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For Arts Council England
Local Government Association

By Locality

Purpose

Public library services are highly valued by the communities that they serve. Local libraries come in all shapes and sizes and can be found in a wide range of locations from city centres to small villages. As library services have moved with the times, so the involvement of local communities in their local libraries has grown. In the last few years in particular, the role of communities – whether individual volunteers, community organisations, social enterprises or Parish and Town Councils – in helping to support and even manage libraries has accelerated.

This report presents the findings of new research about the different ways in which communities have been involved with their libraries. It draws on actual experiences across England and attempts to identify factors which local authorities might find helpful when considering how best to design and manage their own library services. It is intended primarily for local authority officers and members but may well be of interest to others, including community representatives.

The research involved a national mapping of community supported, managed and commissioned libraries in the summer of 2012 undertaken with the support of many library authorities, ten in-depth case studies involving interviews with local authority officers, members and local community representatives and we also interviewed a small number of representatives from national organisations.

The research was conducted, and this report was written, by Locality on behalf of Arts Council England. Locality is the UK's leading network of community enterprises and manages a national community library network, providing access to relevant advice and support.

We would like to thank all of those who took part in this research project – including staff and representatives from Arts Council England, the Local Government Association, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals, the Society of Chief Librarians, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Cabinet Office, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the many local authority officers and Members and local community volunteers who participated in our mapping and case study research.

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Libraries and communities: why does it matter?

"In times of change, it is the learners who will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped for a world that no longer exists. Libraries are for learners."

(Al Rogers – a pioneer of the use of computing in education)

Is it possible to think ahead and imagine what library services might look like in 2020 – and, in particular, what role communities might have within those library services?

Library services are changing rapidly at the moment. Communities have always been involved in their local libraries but current social trends and the scale of financial reductions in local government are prompting the significant reshaping of services and accelerating discussions about what role communities might be able to play. The emerging picture is diverse but has revealed a strong interest from many communities in getting involved in their local libraries. We make no judgements about how we ended up here, but simply acknowledge that change is underway.

Library authorities have a strategic choice to make about whether to embrace more significant community involvement in their library service, and if so, what that might look like. Some might regard the growing community involvement in library services as just an accident of circumstances or even as undermining statutory library services. Our research indicates that community libraries are established out of the determination and passion of local communities and library service managers to retain what they regard as essential services.

Their intentions are long-term, not short term. Many are proving to be adept at recruiting volunteers and raising funds. They are pragmatic about sharing spaces and overheads. They are keen to increase opening hours and extend membership. They have ideas about new activities. Some are enterprising about developing new services and income streams. It is possible that community libraries – perhaps in many different shapes and sizes –could evolve to form a valuable part of 21st Century public library services in England.

If that is the case, then further changes may be needed. Rescuing a library is one thing – establishing it for the long term is something else. Throughout this report we seek to emphasise the importance of thinking ahead and giving these libraries the best possible chances of success in the future.

Many library authorities have recognised the value of communities being more involved in the provision of local libraries and have worked constructively with their staff and with local communities to see what is possible. They are learning to work differently. This report draws on their experiences. It sets out the different approaches being tried, the kinds of benefit that might ensue and the practicalities of getting there. We hope it is helpful to other authorities who wish to learn also.

PART A
An Overview: The National Picture

In this first part of the report, we begin with a national overview of the pressures affecting library services and how community involvement in these services has been growing.

> Library services are currently responding to many drivers of change

Social, demographic, technological and economic shifts are affecting all public sector services including library services. We have identified four significant drivers of change currently impacting on the public library service in the UK.

The digital revolution and customer expectations

Technological innovations, hand in hand with changing customer expectations, are provoking a lot of thinking and changes in the services that libraries offer. A growing proportion of lending now involves e-books. More libraries are using self-service technology. A growing proportion of visits to libraries are also virtual rather than actual. Providing access to the internet and promoting digital literacy are now priorities, particularly for those without a computer at home. Customers are also becoming more demanding about the quality and choice available within services. Keeping pace with these demands and pressures has been challenging for many library services, and the implications are still being worked through in many places.

Joining up services

In recent years there have been moves to bring different kinds of services together. Some library services have sought advantages from strategic and back office integration across library authorities, others have promoted co-location with other public services and community spaces at the local level. There is also growing collaboration between libraries, museums heritage and related arts services initiatives.

Financial challenges

The ongoing reductions in public finances pose a serious challenge for local government, and will do for some years. Library services have been significantly affected, with strong pressure to reduce operating costs and secure efficiencies. Managing costs is not new, and many have already worked hard in recent years to reduce costs through a range of reforms including the sharing of back office functions with other authorities. However, the scale of the present financial challenge is unprecedented and for many authorities more radical solutions have been essential, including the restructuring of services.

Localism

Local and central government are committed to localism- supported by the new Community Rights provisions of the Localism Act 2011, together with growing interest in new models of service delivery including mutual spin-outs, social and community enterprises. Public libraries operate within the overall accountability framework of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, being formally 'superintended' by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, but in terms of delivery library services are fundamentally local services. There is no national standards framework that must be applied, giving local authorities a lot of freedom to design their services to meet local needs and aspirations within their available resources.

So, in the context of these pressures and opportunities, library services across the country continue to evolve. Evidence shows that local libraries remain popular with the public – the 2011/12 Taking Part survey, published by DCMS[i], showed that about 40% of the population use their local library, with demand holding steady since 2008/9. Recent research by Ipsos-MORI for the Carnegie Foundation showed that in England, 74% of respondents thought that public libraries services were essential or very important to the community and 47% to them personally[ii].

Arts Council England, as the development agency for libraries, continues to support and invest in national initiatives to develop innovation in library services – for example the current Libraries Development Initiative. Arts Council England have also commissioned research into 'Envisioning the Future' of library services which aims to develop a challenging and inspiring vision for the purpose, value and potential of public library services in the 21st century.

i.   DCMS, Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport Adult and Child Report, 2012
ii.   Carnegie UK Trust, A New Chapter: Public library services in the 21st Century, 2012

> Community involvement in library services is not new

The involvement of community groups and volunteers in library services is not new and has been a feature of most library services for decades – whether it is local volunteers running educational activities within a library or a 'Friends of…' Group raising funds for new projects or a library run by the community. Community involvement in libraries represents a broad and longstanding set of activities.

CIPFA's survey of public libraries for 2010-11 found over 21,000 volunteers involved in England's 3,300 public libraries. Although this has grown rapidly in recent years (by nearly 70% since 2006-7) it has been a significant feature of library services in England for many years.

Many library authorities also have experience of providing small-scale book collections and lending services, often known as 'library links' or 'community access points', from venues outside of libraries – whether community centres, schools, residential homes or even pubs. These are valued services and illustrate a long tradition of innovation and flexibility that has also been a hallmark of many library services for many years.

> Community involvement in library services is growing

In the last few years, particularly since 2010, there has been a rapidly growing trend to involve communities in library service delivery in more significant ways – not only to support and enhance library services but also in some places to manage them or even take on ownership and management of library buildings. The main purpose of this document is **to understand the different ways in which communities are now involved in supporting or managing core library services in this more substantial way, drawing on recent research. We are using the general term 'community library' to describe these libraries, even though it encompasses a range of approaches.**

Community involvement can also imply a wide range of different people and organisations – when we use the term, we are using it broadly to include individual volunteers, community and voluntary sector organisations, local social enterprises and Parish and Town Councils.

Research that we conducted in July 2012 across England's 151 library authorities highlighted the rapid growth of community libraries. Key findings include:

- More than one in three library authorities now have at least one community library operating within their area, including some in every region of England and in authorities run by all of the main political parties, as well as in urban and rural areas. In quite a number of these areas there are multiple community libraries.

- We found over 170 community libraries presently in operation, representing approximately 5% of all public libraries in England. Most have come into operation in 2011 or 2012.

- Many library authorities had plans for further such libraries in the next few years. The total number of community libraries which are either already operating or planned is presently over 425, which is approximately 12% of all public libraries in England. Given that some Authorities are still reviewing their library services, this number is likely to increase.

- The libraries that are becoming community supported or managed tend to be the smaller libraries in many areas and, as such, they represent a smaller proportion of overall national book lending and borrowers than their numbers may suggest.

- Many of these community libraries remain part of their authority's statutory provision. This is explained further below.

The growth of community involvement in libraries has also received support from the Government. The Minister for Culture, Ed Vaizey MP, gave a speech to the Annual Public Libraries conference in June 2012 in which he said (emphasis ours):

"I am also pleased to see community supported libraries coming into play, particularly where a local authority is planning to close a building. **Community run libraries are contributing to a diverse picture of libraries located within village halls, pubs, shops, churches, day care centres, tourist information centres and enterprise hubs.**

Community managed and community supported libraries will never replace the extensive network of council run libraries we enjoy. But they do provide **an important additional element of provision, and an important alternative model,** which can add to the rich variety of services already available.

It is precisely because of this that my Department is currently working with the Arts Council, LGA, Defra, and DCLG to create a new information resource for authorities considering establishing community supported or community managed libraries in their areas. **It is important that local authorities and community groups work together to ensure that library assets transferred to communities are sustainable in the long term.**"

Communities are supporting libraries in different ways

There is an immense variation in practice on the ground. No two library authorities have followed exactly the same approach, so there is a broad spectrum in the nature of activities. Authorities also often use more than one model, accepting that even within one area, 'one size does not fit all'.

From our recent research, we have developed a simple typology to describe the different approaches to involving communities in supporting or managing libraries. These are summarised in Figure A1.
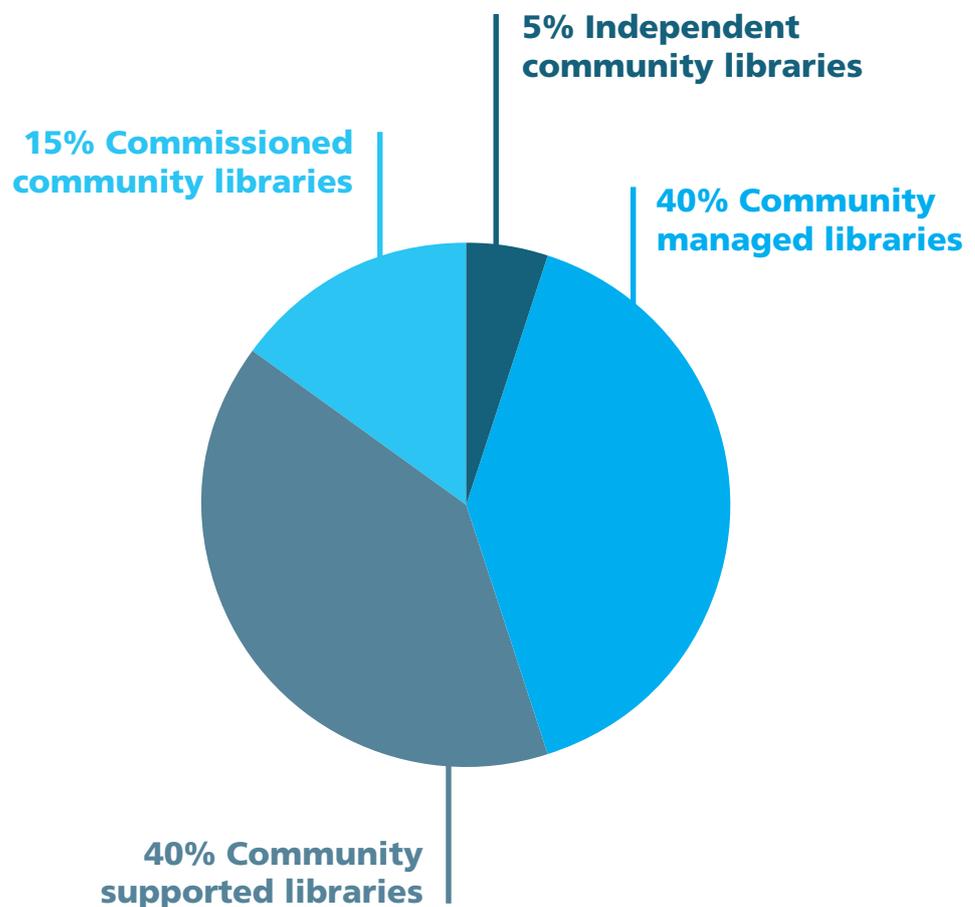
Figure A1:
Different types of community libraries

Type of model:	1) Independent Community Library These have no public sector involvement		2) Co-Produced Library These are partnership models with both public sector and community involvement		
	1a) Asset owning Independent community library, owns its own premises, sometimes after asset transfer from local authority	**1b) Non-asset owning** Independent community library, with no long term lease or freehold on its premises	**2a) Community managed** These are community-led and largely community delivered, rarely with paid staff, but often with some form of ongoing Council support and often still part of the public library network	**2b) Community supported** These are Council-led and funded, usually with paid professional staff, but given significant support by volunteers	**2c) Commissioned community** These are commissioned and fully funded by the Council but delivered by a not-for-private-profit community, social enterprise or mutual organisation, either existing or newly created. Councils might commission i) individual libraries or ii) the whole library service
Provision of Council staffing and funding?	No	No	Some limited support, mainly in the provision of book stock, self-service terminals and professional advice	Yes, Council continues core funding and staffing	Yes, Council remains the funder
Part of the local library management system?	No	No	Yes, usually, but access to some functions may be limited	Yes	Yes
Community asset transfer (CAT) of the building?	Yes	No	Sometimes	Unlikely	Unlikely
Part of statutory provision?	No	No	Many are, some are not	Yes	Yes
Community influence in running libraries?	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
Extent of ongoing public funding?	None	None	Low	Medium	High
Case Study Examples	Grappenhall Library, Warrington	Primrose Hill Library, Camden	Buckinghamshire Bradford North Yorkshire	Lincolnshire Telford and Wrekin Northamptonshire	Croxteth Library, Liverpool Suffolk

The present picture of community involvement is obviously not set in stone – it is probable that new approaches may emerge and that those outlined here will change over time. The present situation is very dynamic.

Not all of these types of library are equally common. Our research revealed the following breakdown for all current and planned community libraries:

Figure A2:
Community libraries by type

5% Independent community libraries

15% Commissioned community libraries

40% Community managed libraries

40% Community supported libraries

Currently, the vast majority of community libraries retain links with their local authority library service and indeed many remain part of the statutory library service.

Illustrations of the different models are presented in the next section.

PART B
The Range of Practice: Summaries of Case Studies

This section presents summaries of each of our ten case studies, newly researched in the summer of 2012 and selected to illustrate the range of practice across England in a mix of urban and rural contexts. The full case studies are available in a separate companion report.

1 – Grappenhall Library, Warrington

Independent community library, including an asset transfer

Transition

After a review of library services in 2010, the Council has proceeded with a significant restructuring. The Council's leisure, library and lifestyle services were transferred to a Community Interest Company (CIC) in May 2012. As part of the restructuring, two libraries, including Grappenhall, were also identified for closure after assessments and consultation, and so did not transfer to the CIC.

Expressions of interest were invited for the library buildings from the community, with no expectation that they should continue to be libraries, and briefing meetings were held for those interested. Formal proposals were submitted by local groups and assessed by the Council and successful groups identified.

Grappenhall is a small library. During the course of public consultations, a group of like-minded residents came together with a shared desire to keep the library open. They constituted a new organisation 'Friends of Grappenhall Library', were selected by the Council to take on the library and have since become registered as a charity. The library building was transferred into their ownership in December 2011, assisted by the Council's asset transfer team and taking about 6 months, and the library re-opened in February 2012.

Model

It is a non-statutory library, and sits outside of the Council's library management system – it has its own system. The Council retains the freehold of the building but has given a long lease on a peppercorn rent. There are no paid staff, but 50 active volunteers, including a number of professionally trained librarians. The Council is providing some financial assistance to cover running costs in the first two years, with support tapering down, and has provided excess furniture free of charge. The library currently has 5,500 books, with most having been donated by local people.

Results so far

Since it has opened, the library has built an active membership of 600 borrowers, maintained the same level of opening hours as before, opening part-time for 5 days per week, and run a number of art exhibitions, as well as providing rehearsal space for the local choir. The library has plans to improve the building and extend the range of activities in the future.

2 – Primrose Hill Library, Camden

Independent community library, no asset transfer

Transition

The Council reviewed its library services in 2011-12 and renewed its vision to see libraries 'at the heart of their communities'. It also conducted a large scale public consultation on how best to deliver services at a lower cost, consulting on a wide range of options. A final decision on how to proceed was made on the basis of a public consultation, a library needs assessment and an equalities impact assessment of all libraries. A number of changes were made, including identification of three libraries considered surplus to requirements in meeting the Council's statutory obligations.

The three library buildings were offered to the local community for their use, and expressions of interest were invited in autumn 2011, following briefing meetings. Proposals were assessed. There was no expectation that these buildings had to be used as libraries, but each of the successful groups did in fact want to keep their library open.

Model

Primrose Hill Community Library is one of the three libraries. It is now a non-statutory library. It is not part of Camden's library management system. It reopened in April 2012. The library is run by a dedicated management board which includes representatives of Primrose Hill Community Association, which acts as the library's accountable body, and the local Friends group.

They have a 20 year lease from the Council, with 100% rent relief for the first 6 years, to be reviewed periodically. The Council have also provided £50,000 transitional funding, plus a contribution to running costs for the first year. They also gifted the book stock and furniture. The library is supported by volunteers but due to a fund-raising campaign, the library has been able to recruit and pay a professional librarian.

Results so far

Prior to securing the library, the Community Association ran a campaign to elicit support and secured 560 pledges of financial support, totalling £600,000 (of which, to date, 80% have been honoured) and 220 pledges of volunteer time. The library is now open for longer than before.

3 – Farnham Common Community Library, Buckinghamshire

Community managed libraries (some including asset transfer)

Transition

After a review and extensive public consultation in 2010-11, the Council agreed that the library service should move to a 'county and community' model, over a two year period, with 9 larger county libraries to be supported by 14 smaller community partnership libraries (plus a further three libraries that are part of a lottery funded project excluded from the review). The community partnership libraries accounted for nearly 20% of total library visits in the county. Local consultation meetings were held with interested parties in each area. There are some longer standing community libraries already in operation in the county, which were able to share their experiences.

Farnham Common Community Library was founded by a new group that came together in response to the public consultation, and includes people with a range of professional skills. It is being set up as a charitable trust.

Model

The community partnership libraries have a range of governance and management arrangements, and differing levels of input from the Council. Some are led by local Parish Councils, some are led by community groups. They form part of statutory provision.

Farnham Common Community Library has a 25 year lease for its building from the Council, at a peppercorn rent, with the Council still responsible for external maintenance. There is also a Police office and a Surestart Children's Centre in the building – each pay rent to the library, providing the library with a modest income. The library is run by volunteers. The library has a contract with the Council to provide a core public library service with minimum opening hours, in return for which the Council provides £5,000 per year to help cover some of the running costs, book stock, access to the library management system, computers and support.

Results so far

The library is open for longer than before, has a growing list of borrowers, a database of 500 volunteers, a rota of 30 active volunteers and receives donations from local organisations.

4 – Bradford

Community managed libraries

Transition

In 2010-11, the Council reviewed its library services and identified five libraries for possible closure out of its 31 (static) public libraries. Four of these have since become community managed libraries, (including three in rural locations), and one has been replaced by a mobile library. In each case, the local community was consulted on a range of options as an alternative to closure and the choice was made locally.

New community groups were formed in each of the four areas opting for a community managed library, with support from existing local groups and parish councils. Council library staff worked with volunteers to support the transition. The libraries opened in 2011-12.

Model

Each library leases its building from the relevant landlord (not the Council in most cases) via the lead organisation – whether the Parish council or a community association. Each library also has a Service Level Agreement with the Council, which includes a commitment from the Council to provide some agreed revenue funding, and each library remains part of its statutory provision. The Council provides book stock, computers, access to the library management system, training and support. Its dedicated Development Officer is in regular contact. The library agrees to maintain agreed standards and manage its volunteers appropriately. It has a relationship with a nearby 'link' library for further support. Costs are covered from a range of sources, including local community groups and local charitable fund-raising.

Results so far

Opening hours have increased in all community managed libraries. The Council intends to review the initiative in 2012/13.

5 – North Yorkshire

Community managed libraries

Transition

The County Council had been experimenting with community managed libraries for a number of years, but accelerated its plans in 2011 as the pressure on local government finances became clear. A number of changes have been made to the library service. Many libraries in this largely rural County have been retained and continue to be led by paid professional librarians, but with reductions in staff time and greater use of volunteers. In addition, a total of 22 of the smaller libraries were identified for closure unless local proposals to retain them were made. Interest was received from communities in respect of most of the affected libraries and currently 9 have reopened as community libraries, with more likely to follow. These remain statutory libraries.

The County also operates 'outlets' and 'collection points', small manually operated book collections or places where books can be collected, which are also part of the statutory provision.

Model

Most of the community managed libraries are run by new groups set up for the purpose of running the library. Many are companies limited by guarantee, some are closely linked to their local Town or Parish Council, which sometimes hold the lease where a group is not formally constituted. Some libraries are now co-located with the relevant Parish Council to save overheads. Leases vary from 2 years to 25 years, reflecting the wishes of the community group, usually at a peppercorn rent. Each library has a written agreement with the Council. The Council provides, and refreshes, the book stock, computers and provides training and support, but does not provide paid professional staff for the library. The library undertakes to meet agreed standards of service.

Results so far

Opening hours have been maintained and photographic and planning exhibitions have been held in a number of libraries. There are hopes to turn more of the community libraries into 'community hubs' offering a range of services and opportunities.

6 – Saxilby Community Library, Lincolnshire

Community supported libraries

Transition

The County Council in this large rural county is committed to consulting with local communities and seeing how the service can evolve to meet the pressures and opportunities in front of it.

A number of communities have approached the Council to ask to take over their local library, and the Council has considered each request. As a result, a number of community libraries have developed in recent years, each one different. It has been a bottom-up process.

Model

The example here is Saxilby library, near Lincoln. The County Council has moved the library service into the multi-purpose sports and leisure centre owned and run by Saxilby with Ingleby Parish Council. The centre includes a café/bar, meeting rooms and changing rooms for the neighbouring sports field. The library is now run by the Parish Council, with support from a newly established Friends group. The County Council have signed a 10 year Service Level Agreement with the Parish Council and provides some of the library's running costs. The Parish Council had also borrowed £50,000 from the Public Loans Works Board to fund physical changes to its centre to enable the library's re-location. The income from the Agreement will enable repayment of this loan.

The County Council is also making an overall saving as the community library will be run by the Parish Council and volunteers, after the previous paid staff were offered relocation. Parish Council staff will oversee the library, with support from volunteers. The library remains part of the library management system, makes use of self-service technology and book stock is still provided by the County Council. The co-location of the library with the café should boost footfall to both and support cross-subsidy of the library.

Results so far

The community library is due to open in October 2012 in new premises, with a café in the same Centre and with increased opening hours.

7 – Telford and Wrekin

Community supported libraries

Transition

Situated in the West Midlands, Telford and Wrekin is a mix of urban and rural locations. The Council is one of England's 'co-operative councils' and it has sought to use these principles in its approach to reviewing and reshaping its library service. The Council also has a longstanding Parish Charter, so has worked closely with Town and Parish Councils in making changes to the service.

A review of libraries led by elected members took place in 2011-12, with local consultation. The Council decided to make 20% cost savings but retain all of its 9 libraries. Of these, it was decided that five of the smaller neighbourhood libraries would have reduced core opening hours but that the hours could be maintained or extended if other sources of top-up funding could be found. Other cost savings were also found.

Model

All of the libraries remain open and part of the statutory service and continue to be staffed by professional library staff. The four main libraries are open 35 or 46 hours per week. The five neighbourhood libraries are funded by the Council to open 16 hours per week, less than previously. Two of these libraries are now part-funded by their local Parish Council to open for 3-5 hours longer per week. In Stirchley and Brookside Parish, the Parish Council moved to co-locate with the library, which allows the library to share its overheads and to remain open for longer, as self-service terminals can be overseen by Parish Council staff when library staff are not present.

Volunteers also assist with particular library activities. There are also plans to open a café/coffee bar with the Stirchley library.

Results so far

Some of the neighbourhood libraries have longer opening hours than they would have had without Parish Council involvement.

8 – Northamptonshire

Community supported libraries

Transition

The County's Library and Information Service has been reviewed several times in the last few years, most recently in 2011. It was felt that the County had limited scope to reduce the number of libraries so the emphasis was on delivering efficiencies, generating income, increasing volunteering and using libraries as a strategic part of the Council's wider approach to customer service. The review consulted locally and included a survey.

Communities were given three main options to consider and the expressed preference was for 'partnership libraries', with libraries run by professional staff but with support from volunteers. The plan that emerged from the review included objectives to make cost savings, increase volunteering, increase generated income, grow the membership of Friends groups and introduce some charitable fund-raising.

An Advisory Group was established by the Council to give ideas and advice to the service. The Group included local business representatives and also sought ideas from abroad.

Model

The Council's approach of 'partnership libraries' is applied to all of its 36 static libraries across the county, all of which remain part of the statutory service and all of which continue to be run by professional library staff. The approach is an evolution of previous arrangements and is also called 'LibraryPlus' to emphasise that libraries are more than buildings and do more than lend books.

As part of its overall approach, the Library and Information Service:

- works with the Local Enterprise Partnership to provide business support through enterprise hubs in two libraries, with plans to extend this to more libraries, and hosts Job Clubs in some libraries, providing information, advice and guidance to job seekers

- is exploring the provision of 'work pods' for new businesses needing office space

- secures income and provides a wider range of services by allowing other public services to use library space for outreach – e.g. HM Revenue and Customs providing tax advice surgeries, IT training, the Police meeting with the public

- has co-located some libraries with Children's Centres

- now issues the County's bus passes

- provides services for older people

- provides activities for young people

- is seeking to generate income from the non-statutory elements of the library service and by managing the library services of other authorities

- seeks online charitable donations

The County's volunteering programme is carefully planned – with 33 role descriptions, interviews of potential volunteers, training provided and rewards offered to volunteers in the form of free adult learning opportunities. A 'time bank' initiative is also being piloted in partnership with a local charity.

Results so far

The County has made savings on its library service but has retained all of its libraries. It now has 820 active volunteers and 25% of all new members show an interest in volunteering. A wider range of services is now available from the County's libraries.

9 – Croxteth Community Library, Liverpool

Commissioned library

Transition

Alt Valley Community Trust was founded in 1983 and is a community anchor organisation which provides a range of local services – adult education, training, community and cultural activities. It runs a 'Communiversity' lifelong learning centre and manages the neighbouring Croxteth Sports Centre. It has a sister organisation, a Neighbourhood Services Company, which delivers contracts (e.g. grounds maintenance) for the Council and local housing associations. Operating surpluses from contract delivery are reinvested in community activities.

In 2010, after Croxteth library had suffered a lot of anti-social behaviour and was seeing declining usage, the City Council and the Community Trust, with the active support of local politicians, agreed to work in partnership to improve the local library service. The Community Trust's local profile and relationships were seen as an opportunity to address the problem.

The library was re-located into the Community Trust's 'Communiversity' building and is now managed by the Trust. It is presently Liverpool's only community managed library.

Model

The library remains part of the City Council's statutory provision, and remains fully integrated with the library management system. The Council has a service contract with the Community Trust, capped at £50,000 per year, although the Trust also funds some activities itself. The Trust employs two paid members of staff to run the library who work the equivalent of 1.5 full-time equivalent positions. Professional advice and support is also provided by the City Council's library service. The Council continues to replenish the book stock. Volunteers provide additional support on particular tasks.

Results so far

Usage of the library has increased considerably since the Trust took it over. Additional resources are also being expended on the library by the Trust. There are plans to expand the library space.

10 – Suffolk

Commissioned libraries

Transition

Suffolk County Council set itself the target of reducing costs in its library service by 30% by 2013-14. Some of these have been achieved by efficiency savings, but the remaining 20% has been sought by developing a new structural model for delivering library services.

A review and consultation was conducted in 2011, considering a number of options. At the same time, the Council declared a commitment to 'developing decision-making at a local level' to enable a stronger partnership with communities and to encourage new ideas. Council officers worked with local groups associated with 14 of the county's 44 static libraries to explore how greater community involvement in libraries might work.

In December 2011, the Council resolved to commission its library service from an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) for Community Benefit with charitable status. Such a structure enables 80% mandatory relief to be secured on non-domestic rates on all library buildings, which is a significant cost saving. It was also considered by the Council to be the model most likely to facilitate community involvement in, and governance of, libraries. In January 2012, a 'shadow' IPS was established and the full IPS became operational in August 2012, although the Interim Board was still in place. A total of 515 staff (180 full-time equivalent) transferred to the IPS.

Model

Suffolk County Council retains its statutory responsibility for securing a public library service across the county, and retains some library staff in-house to enable it to act as a client, but has commissioned the IPS to provide the library service. The IPS operates the county's 44 static and 6 mobile libraries, provides central services and is responsible for the development of community governance.

The County Council has retained ownership of the various library buildings but leased them to the IPS on a landlord repairing and insuring basis for 25 years at a peppercorn rent.

It is hoped that each library will form a management group that will become a member within the IPS, and that nominated representatives from each member group will elect the Directors of the IPS when the full Board is formed.

Over time it is intended that individual libraries will develop community governance, with local people as members of those individual libraries. The IPS will then contract with each individual library, providing funding in exchange for an agreed level of service performance. It is currently anticipated that each library will develop community governance at its own pace, with most libraries currently only having unincorporated Friends groups. A menu of delegated responsibilities will allow libraries to take on more responsibility as they feel able to, allowing local variation. It is possible in future that local libraries could own their own buildings and employ their own staff, but this situation is some way off currently.

Results so far

Library services and opening hours remain as before, although some cost savings have now been achieved as a result of the change to the IPS.

PART C
Community Involvement in Libraries: Strategic Considerations

In considering community involvement in library services, it is important to take a strategic and long term view, preferably as part of a wider review of the library service. This section identifies a number of key questions for library authorities to think about.

Which outcomes are being sought by your library service?

Have a positive vision for, and a clear statement of, your public library service. This should be based on an assessment of local need within the available resources and reflect a rounded vision of the whole library service.

Public libraries provide a universal service open to all, and serve many different groups within our communities, often with differing needs and interests. Libraries give access to knowledge through books, journals, newspapers and the internet, providing study space as well as more specialist resources. Technological developments are having a profound effect on how people want to access (and generate) knowledge today and this is continuing to provoke significant change within libraries. Libraries promote literacy and inspire engagement with culture. Libraries are also social spaces where people meet, learn from each other and can sometimes access other services. Many libraries have a longstanding history of local public service and can represent part of an area's heritage and act as physical landmarks for a community.

Even though public library services may be changing in how they operate and what they do, they are likely to remain for many years as "powerful entities around which communities will gather"[iii], in the words of one futurist.

If an authority wishes to include community libraries within its statutory library service they still need to be part of the overall framework and contribute to the overall vision, and that vision itself needs to respond to the needs and aspirations of the local community.

iii.   Da Vinci Institute, Libraries of the future: Interview with Thomas Frey

Thinking about different outcomes

There is no national definition as to what a library is or what outcomes a library service should be delivering. Further discussion of this will be aided by the forthcoming publication of the 'Envisioning the Library Service of the Future' work currently being undertaken for Arts Council England.

Many library authorities have been updating their own 'vision' for their service. This may be differently expressed but at its core it usually seeks to capture aspects of:

- Encouraging reading

- Promoting digital literacy and providing access to the internet

- Enabling lifelong learning

- Helping people find information of all kinds, whether specialist knowledge or information about local services

- Enriching cultural life

- Providing a safe space to meet

- Providing a helpful space to study

Many libraries go beyond these activities and provide access to other services on site or are co-located with other services, or are exploring new ways of providing the library service – new locations, different opening hours, e-lending, adding new skills requirements. Some are locating the service within a wider effort to strengthen the local economy – fostering innovation and enterprise, providing working space for start-up businesses – or helping to achieve better health for local people or contributing to 'active ageing' strategies, amongst many other initiatives. In rural areas, there may be additional needs that should be addressed, particularly the challenge of access to services.

These outcomes also need to be delivered within clear financial parameters, so economy and value for money are obviously key aims also, as is long term sustainability.

Thinking about need and equalities

Any strategy for the future must reflect local need and ensure that services are being fairly delivered. The library service is a 'universal service', which is expected to encourage access. Listening to local communities and understanding their needs is fundamental.

A local needs assessment should be undertaken periodically by all library authorities. Tools exist to support this process, and a lot of relevant data is available from CIPFA, Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and the recent Census. Councils also have a legal obligation to **equality impact assess** the way that the service is being delivered (both currently and in the future) to ensure that there is no adverse impact or barriers to usage for groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. For local authorities that include rural areas, DEFRA provides advice on how to ensure that services take proper account of the needs of rural communities, including their new Local Level Rural Proofing materials (see Section F for more details).

Which outcomes could community involvement contribute towards?

There are different library service outcomes to which community involvement can contribute, and different types of community involvement. Taking a long-term view is important.

There is longstanding evidence of the value of volunteer involvement in library services. Evidence from our library service case studies, and more generally, suggests that there is a wider range of contributions which communities are now making to library service networks, with multiple benefits.

Community involvement	Types of benefit
Community management of a library This can take different forms, but some libraries are now run by local community groups or social enterprises, usually with some professional librarian advice. Libraries might be commissioned and funded by the local authority, or might be largely self-financing.	• Reduces operating costs to the public sector • Can enable a library to remain open when it might have closed, and often open for longer hours • Community management can bring renewed energy and innovation to the service, prompting new activities and more flexible use of the space • Often prompts increased usage by the local community through an enhanced sense of ownership • Provides valuable experience to the community group
Community support of library staff in operating the library In some libraries, the professional library staff are supported by volunteers in a range of delegated and supervised tasks to help operate the library	• Can reduce operating costs • Can enable a library to remain open for longer hours • Frees up librarians to focus on more complex tasks • Provides helpful work experience for volunteers

Fund raising to support a local library	• Provides additional resources to enhance the bookstock and the range of activities that are possible
Many 'Friends of…' groups raise funds and encourage donations to their local library to support additional activities and buy books	
Volunteering to support additional activities	• Enhances the range and scale of activities on offer
	• Provides experience for the volunteers
For years, unpaid volunteers have been providing support to reading groups, literacy programmes, children's activities, etc	

Experience suggests that community involvement works best when there is a planned partnership between the local authority and the local community, and it is a considered part of the library service strategy.

Community involvement is not a 'quick fix', it benefits from staged development, training and investment. For more substantial community involvement, local authorities and communities both need time and resources to work out how best they can work together and manage the transition to new arrangements. Those arrangements need to be put in place with a view to the long term – considering how the prospects for sustainability can be strengthened.

Are you reviewing individual libraries or the whole service?

Libraries form part of networks and so changes to individual libraries are best viewed within a strategic perspective, not just in isolation.

All public libraries form part of a wider network. The same is true of most community libraries – very few are fully independent, or want to operate in isolation. There are advantages to all sides in working together and benefiting from being part of the same networks and systems.

Most library services already include a range of different kinds of public library – differing by size, range of services offered, location, etc. These are often complemented with smaller book collections and similar arrangements with a wide range of public and community venues. A modern library service is therefore the sum total of a number of different parts which work together.

In considering how communities might be involved in a library service, it is usually best to consider the service as a whole and from a strategic perspective. Community libraries may be able to make an important contribution to the overall outcomes which the library service is striving for. They also do not necessarily need to provide exactly the same services that other public libraries in the area provide.

Some library authorities have embedded community libraries as a core part of their service – for example in Buckinghamshire, the 14 community partnership libraries form a significant part of the network of 36 (static) public libraries across the county.

Some library authorities have gone further and have sought to move their entire library service closer to being a community-led model – for example, Suffolk County Council have transferred management of all of their libraries to a new Industrial and Provident Society and the London Borough of Lambeth's library service is moving to a modern co-operative model.

Are you reviewing library buildings or services (or both)?

Distinguishing between a service and the building it operates within can be important in clarifying what sorts of changes, if any, need to be made to a library service.

There are many different types of library. All libraries change over time. When reviewing how a library service operates and consulting with the local community it is important to distinguish between:

- The library service being delivered

- The buildings from which the library service is being delivered

It may be possible to deliver the same service from a different and more appropriate building or location. The local community may be as attached to the heritage and social value of the building as they are to the library service. In rural areas with few local public services, a library may have particular value as a focus for community activity. Sometimes disentangling the two things – building and service – is important in order to understand what a community's priorities might be.

In particular, if there is interest in securing community management of a library, it is also helpful to distinguish between the service and the buildings, as it may be more desirable for the community to manage the one but not the other, although some will want to manage both. Decisions about both services and the buildings they operate from need to be taken within strategic frameworks – is there both a library service strategy and an asset management strategy? We look at community asset transfer and community asset ownership and management later in this document.

PART D
Community Involvement in Libraries: Busting Some Myths

This section draws on our research, including the case studies, to dispel some common myths about community libraries…

Community libraries can be statutory

Community libraries can form part of a local authority's network of libraries through which it fulfils its statutory duties.

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, library authorities have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service for their local community. They must assess local need and provide a library service to meet that need, taking account of their available resources.

Each library authority is able to provide their library service in whatever way seems best, as the 1964 Act empowers authorities to secure services by "appropriate means" to fulfil local need. Local authorities therefore have significant discretion as to how best to deliver their services. This can include working with partners and delegating delivery to other organisations as well as funding other libraries that are serving the public.

So, as long as a library is serving the public and not charging for lending its books, it can be considered as part of the local statutory library service if the library authority considers that the library is required in order to fulfil its statutory duties and wishes to provide on-going support for it. Local authorities should be clear as to whether any community libraries within their area are part of their statutory provision or not.

Public Lending Right

Any books which are loaned to members of the public from any of a library authority's book collections are covered by the Public Lending Right, a national scheme run by the Public Lending Right Registrar to financially compensate authors for the lending of their books in this way. This includes books which are being lent by community libraries if the books still belong to the authority.

Current UK legislation on copyright also allows any other local library to lend books to the public provided it is on a not-for-private-profit basis. However, a 1992 EU Directive does give individual authors the right to withdraw lending rights to their works in these libraries if they wish to do so, although they must notify those libraries of their intentions.

There is no single model of community involvement in libraries

There is no single model of community involvement in libraries. Locally appropriate solutions usually work best (although some things are true everywhere!)

In the first part of this report we describe the different models of community involvement in libraries which have emerged in recent years. They vary from conventional public libraries with a few part-time volunteers to libraries managed by communities in partnership with the library authority through to fully funded public libraries being commissioned from the community/voluntary sector.

The best approach to community involvement will be the one which is most locally appropriate – appropriate to the community's needs, to the community's capacity and interest in being involved and to the library authority's service priorities. Priorities may also change over time.

Some Town and Parish Councils have also been active in supporting their local libraries through co-location, direct funding or working with other community groups to find volunteers.

Most community libraries are not independent, they are partnerships with their local council

Local authorities and their communities can work together in partnership, bringing the best of each other together, to deliver new kinds of services.

Our research highlighted that, currently, 95% of community libraries are in fact partnerships between the community and the library authority. The perception that a community library is a completely independent entity, operating in isolation to other local public libraries, is rarely true.

The library authority can contribute infrastructure, book stock, professional advice and training to the partnership and often provides at least some ongoing support – for example, advice and training, refreshing the book stock, or providing some direct grant funding. The local community can supply volunteers – often with a wide range of skills, enthusiasm and new ideas – and often has better links with 'hard to reach' groups locally. The more established local community organisations who manage libraries can also often offer premises, scope for co-locating services, entrepreneurialism, experience of joined up service delivery and professional expertise into the mix too. Some Parish and Town Councils have also provided space for the relocation of their local library and even direct funding.

Community libraries seek to do more with less, not less with less!

Reducing the public funding for a library does not mean that it can only do less and do it in a worse way, it may be possible to deliver a service differently and even enhance it in some ways. Every library must have a positive vision for the future.

Whilst these are difficult times and some libraries have been closing, it is a mistake to characterise community libraries simply as 'knee jerk' reactions to closure, which are doomed to deliver an 'inferior' service.

Some libraries have come into being through sudden changes, but many such transitions have been carefully planned by library authorities, in consultation with their community. Some have been in development for even longer than this as part of planned long-term strategies by the library authority.

If a community library is being planned, it makes sense for all concerned to develop a shared and positive vision for that library for the longer term. If a library is to remain open, then it should deliver a high quality service. Whilst the reduction in public funding is clearly a challenge, experience shows that community libraries can generate local enthusiasm, recruit volunteers, co-locate with other services, often extend opening hours and bring new imagination to how the library service can be delivered and even enhanced, as well as generate ideas for new income streams. Community libraries can play a positive role as one part of local service provision.

Communities often want to be involved in their libraries (but not always)

We should not underestimate the levels of interest, and capacity, for local communities to support their local libraries. However, communities differ and some are less able to do this.

A number of library authorities have been surprised by how strongly many local people value their library services and how many are willing to get personally involved in supporting their libraries. For example:

- Farnham Common Community Library in Buckinghamshire, is a community-led library delivered in partnership with Buckinghamshire County Council. It reopened in October 2011 and after less than a year had around 500 local people on its database who had volunteered to help.

- In Northamptonshire, where the County Council has been supporting volunteering in its libraries for a number of years, there are now over 800 active volunteers, with the list continuing to grow each year.

- In Primrose Hill, an affluent area of the London Borough of Camden, the Community Association secured pledges of financial support from 560 local residents to keep the local library open, totalling £600,000 (80% of which have been honoured), and with 220 pledges of volunteer time.

- In Croxteth, Liverpool, a local community trust took on the delivery of the local library. It continues to be funded by the City Council but the trust have relocated it to their multi-purpose lifelong learning centre and now run it as part of their wider social enterprise. They have been able to increase opening hours, increase library usage and co-locate with other services.

Community interest cannot be assumed, but needs to be assessed. Some communities are less able to get involved with service delivery and are sometimes less interested. Often, such communities are the very ones that most readily benefit from the provision of library services. Therefore, councils should consider whether it is appropriate to offer additional tailored support in these areas.

In areas with less capacity for community action, there may well be local community trusts or social enterprises which do have the capacity to lead on the delivery of a community library and who may have a track record in engaging the local community. Some library authorities have used this route to involve communities, where it has local support.

Community libraries are often more than 'just volunteers'

Professionalism must be at the heart of any library service. Community managed libraries can be professionally run, usually involve unpaid volunteers and paid professionals working closely together and a number employ their own paid professional staff.

Every library service in England has trained and skilled professional library staff working at its heart. This is essential. There continues to be a need for paid professional library staff working in every library authority area, and of course professional staff and their representatives need to be fully consulted on any proposed changes to services.

However, experience shows that professional staff and communities can, and often do, work side by side and complement each other effectively. Most library services have been working successfully with communities and volunteers for many years. The majority of community libraries presently benefit from both voluntary input and professional input, particularly where those libraries remain part of the wider network of local public libraries, as most do. Members of the community bring with them a range of relevant skills, not just enthusiasm and time. Where they are entirely staffed by volunteers, they are often still advised by professional library authority staff, and quite a number have made use of enthusiasm amongst retired or part-time librarians as volunteers.

Not every library in a library service needs to look the same, provide exactly the same service as all the others nor have the same kinds of staff on site every day. The role of a library may also change with time. The challenge is to ensure that an individual library, as part of a wider network, makes an appropriate contribution to the service. The aim of each community library is to provide the best possible service to its local community in an appropriate way.

Community libraries do not always rely entirely on voluntary inputs. Some of the better funded community managed libraries are employing core professional staff to assist them in delivering services.

Commissioned community libraries also represent a rather different strand of activity – they can provide a funded and professional library service, but outsourced and managed by not-for-private-profit organisations. In some areas, these are individual libraries which have been commissioned by the library authority from the community sector. In other areas, the entire library service has been commissioned from a third sector organisation – for example Suffolk's recent move to use an Industrial and Provident Society or Peterborough's commissioning of Vivacity, a company limited by guarantee and a charity, to deliver its cultural and leisure services (including libraries).

Library buildings and assets can be transferred into community ownership

Some library buildings are now being transferred into the ownership of the local community, to provide a firmer foundation for their future.

Our research showed that the majority of community libraries are still run from buildings owned (or sometimes leased) and managed by the local authority, with approximately one in six community library buildings now owned and managed by the community. But the numbers are growing. In practice, this means that the community own the building's freehold or a lease of 20 years or more.

Transferring a building into community ownership is not always appropriate. Each case needs to be considered on its own merits. However, in the last few years community asset transfer has become much more commonplace. The majority of local authorities in England are now engaged in transferring assets to communities, and one in three has a formal policy and procedures endorsed by elected member to enable this.

Where there is a community organisation that is willing and able to take responsibility for a community asset, such as a library, and there is a reasonable business plan for its future then such transfers can provide important additional benefits. Community ownership can protect the social purpose of a building into the future where a community organisation has an in-built 'asset lock' (e.g. a charity or community interest company), provide a firm basis for fund-raising for investment in the building or community enterprise and can galvanise local efforts to stabilise and improve the library service.

Government funded advice and support is available to local authorities and communities interested in community asset transfers – with further details given at the end of this report.

PART E
Community Involvement in Libraries: Learning From Experience

This section sets out some of the key learning points identified from our recent research. These are factors to consider when seeking whether and/or how to involve communities in libraries. The case studies that we are drawing on here are also available separately.

Stage 1: Developing your strategy

What roles could the community play in your library service?

Library authorities need a clear vision and strategy for their whole library service that is consistent with their statutory duty, which addresses the known local needs and which is affordable within available resources. Any community role in the library service should also be set out within the strategy. The strategy will then inform any subsequent service commissioning or reshaping.

In determining what role communities might play within that strategy, there are a number of key questions to ask.

What sort of outcomes do we want community involvement to bring to our service?

What are we trying to achieve by involving communities? Sought outcomes could include:

- A broader range of activities within the library or co-location with other organisations
- Retaining libraries in locations that facilitate access for more people, in urban and rural areas
- Protection or even extension of opening hours
- Attracting greater usage in particular libraries
- Reduced operational overheads

- Greater enterprise, new income streams
- Charitable fund-raising
- Management of the library service
- Management of the library building
- Transfer of ownership of the library building to the community

Which libraries are relevant for greater community involvement?

Different kinds of involvement may be relevant for different libraries – there does not have to be a standard approach. Most libraries engage volunteers, but are there some libraries where a different approach is appropriate? Where there are a number of libraries involved, it may be sensible to adopt a staged approach over time, to enable a sensible transition.

The identification of libraries for any significant change obviously needs to be undertaken within a clear and transparent framework of local needs assessment, equalities impact assessment and full local staff and community consultation.

Is community involvement sought for both library services and buildings?

It is possible to involve the community in:

- managing a service but not the buildings, or
- moving a library service into a community-managed building, or
- managing both the service and the buildings

What is the local capacity for effective community involvement?

Community support or management of libraries is only possible if the community is willing and able to do this. Some are, some are not. Capacity should not be assumed, but assessed through enquiry and discussion. This could include not just individual volunteers or the existing 'Friends of…' group, but also other established community organisations, social enterprises and Parish and Town Councils. The capacity of the local authority to provide appropriate support also needs to be assessed, as it will be a partnership. Elected ward councillors often have a helpful role to play in holding exploratory discussions with their local communities and identifying potential providers of support.

What kind of partnership should the Authority and the community have in respect of any community libraries?

What is the relative balance between Authority and community involvement in the library? Is it an Authority-led library with some community support, or a community-led library with some Authority support? Is the partnership intended to continue into the longer term? If so, what support is in place to ensure this happens? What transitional arrangements might be needed?

Should any community libraries be part of the statutory provision or not?

This is a decision for the library authority and should reflect the nature of the community library's intended relationship with the Authority.

From this it should be possible to determine which approach or approaches, if any, are appropriate for your library service.

How can councils collaborate with the community in developing plans to reshape library services?

Most library authorities who have supported the establishment of community libraries in their areas have engaged in early discussions with the community. A collaborative process allows better informed decision-making and reduces misunderstandings. It also makes it possible to gauge the level of interest in different approaches to identify those most likely to work locally. In short, it is usually best to give the community a choice of options and involve them in deciding which option is best.

Discussions usually then lead on to the preparation of business plans, to test the practical reality of what is being proposed, and to identify issues that need to be resolved. Decision-making needs to be robust, with councils able to say 'no' as well as 'yes' for clear and transparent reasons.

To facilitate discussions, a range of information is usually helpful. The information that is required in this process and, in particular, to build trust includes:

(a) accurate financial information about existing running costs (of both the service and buildings) and capital requirements to maintain the buildings in good condition

(b) a review of the buildings that sets out who owns what and which neighbouring buildings or services might be involved in co-locations or provide community facilities in the absence of a library

(c) a public consultation process that involves surveys – often at the service level first and then at the local level to find out local views and willingness to get involved where branches are identified as 'at risk' in some way

(d) usage and visitor information for each library

(e) a library needs assessment and an impact assessment of any proposed closures – taking account of poverty, rurality and other equalities factors

(f) local interest and capacity to take on and manage a library asset or service (and the nature of support available to help those who wish to take over a library)

Sometimes authorities provide, or commission from other organisations, advice and support to communities to get involved in these processes and develop plans.

Figure E1
Example of working with the community

Buckinghamshire

Local variation reflects a collaborative and flexible process

Following a public consultation on the library service that ran from November 2010 to February 2011 a move to a 'county and community' model was agreed by the County Council's Cabinet in 2011. The county already had a track record of self-managed community libraries that worked with the Library Service, e.g. via a shared IT system, allowing users to access libraries across the county.

The Council sought to develop 14 community partnerships with local community groups, parish councils and partner organisations over a 2-year period. The 14 community libraries are mainly in rural areas and are supported by 9 (larger) county libraries and they also have access to online reference material and reservations across the south east of England.

The community libraries operate with different governance and management arrangements, e.g. parish councils take a lead role in some areas and in other areas community groups are in the lead. The 2011 visitor figures for the 14 community libraries show they made up nearly 20% of the total visits across the service.

Buckinghamshire County Council held a public consultation on the future of libraries that ran from November 2010 to February 2011. In order to ensure the consultation process was inclusive, the consultation documentation was made available in standard and large print versions, an audio version for people with visual impairments was also produced, and the documentation was also available in Urdu. The consultation invited residents, community groups, local businesses and organisations to work with the Council in order to find lower cost ways of delivering sustainable local library services. The Council held 14 information meetings attended by approximately 1,000 people.

The lead and/or the deputy lead member for community engagement (which includes the libraries portfolio) addressed each of the public consultation meetings on behalf of the council. Follow-up workshops were held in most communities, together with additional local meetings with community groups and residents. In some wards, local ward councillors took the lead in responding to the changes. The Council also received over 100 letters and emails in response to the consultation.

The Council undertook a survey that received around 3,000 responses (the equivalent of approximately 3% of library users): 45% of respondents agreed with the proposed delivery model; 34% disagreed with it; 9% had no view; and 12% didn't answer the question. Over one-third of respondents expressed interest in getting involved with their local library, along with 189 organisations that expressed an interest in working with a local library. Opposition to the proposals came from some parish and town councils – that expressed concern at a potential disproportionate adverse impact on rural areas – as well as from residents of those areas most affected by the proposed changes.

Proposals for each community library developed out of these consultations and discussions. There is variation in local governance and management arrangements across Buckinghamshire, in some instances new friends groups were established, in order to take over a local library (e.g. in Winslow, where the Town Council opposed the plans); in other cases a Village Hall Trust led work on the transition (e.g. Ivinghoe). Parish councils took the lead in Long Crendon and Stoken Church. Arrangements have developed to reflect local interest and capacity.

How can enterprise and income generation be promoted within the library service?

As part of the reshaping of library services, there is a challenge to not only reduce running costs but to rethink how those services can be provided in ways that are more joined up with other services and rendered financially sustainable for the long-term. Enterprise is an increasingly important ingredient in achieving library service outcomes, and can be actively promoted within library strategies.

Library authorities are already exploring how to promote greater enterprise and income generation within their services and the evidence suggests that greater community involvement can often accelerate and expand this.

A number of community libraries have been able to co-locate with other public and community services to share costs and promote the mutual support of each service's usage. Where libraries are operated by Parish or Town Councils or established community anchor organisations, the cross subsidy of services is also sometimes possible. Sharing space and using self-service technology can also sometimes allow library opening hours to be extended.

As new people and organisations become involved in the management of community libraries, new ideas can be brought to bear in how the services are run and tested out, and this could benefit all libraries. Across the country, a growing network of community enterprises are setting up cafes, running shops, providing services and even opening cinemas and this same enterprise, and these income streams, could potentially benefit libraries too.

Figure E2
Examples of enterprise in libraries

Croxteth Community Library, Liverpool

Community enterprise supporting an enhanced library service

Alt Valley Community Trust runs Croxteth Library for the City Council. It is a community anchor organisation. The library is now based in the Trust's 'Communiversity' building, a lifelong learning centre, and the Trust has plans to expand the library and introduce a media centre, paid for out of its own resources. The Trust uses the operating profits from some of its other activities to provide an enhanced library service.

Farnham Common Community Library, Buckinghamshire

Co-located public services provide an income

The community library now has a 25 year lease on its building from the Council but has two other public services located within the building – an office for the local Police and a Surestart Children's Centre. Both of these pay rent to the library, providing an income stream to help cover running costs.

Saxilby Community Library, Lincolnshire

An enterprising Parish Council: moving a library into a mixed-use centre

The Parish Council owns and runs a mixed use centre which provides meeting rooms for hire, a café/bar and changing rooms for neighbouring sports fields. The Parish Council took a loan from the Public Loans Works Board to enable it to make some changes to the building and move the local library service into it. The Parish Council is being paid by the County Council for delivering the library service and this income covers the repayment of the loan. The arrangement has also allowed the County Council to make an ongoing saving. The location of the library with the café and other services means that they should promote footfall for each other, and the Parish Council is able to share overheads across the different services it provides.

Northamptonshire

Libraries as community hubs

The County Council has sought to reduce the overheads of its libraries and generate income where possible. Initiatives include:

- Other public services pay to use library service space to deliver their services – e.g. HM Revenue and Customs provide tax advice surgeries from some libraries periodically, some libraries have weekly Jobs Clubs and IT training is delivered in some libraries

- Some public services are permanently co-located with libraries and share overheads – e.g. Children's Centres

- Working with the Local Enterprise Partnership, some libraries are supporting business start-ups by providing 'work pods' for business people needing start-up office space and linking them with volunteer business mentors

When is Community Asset Transfer likely to be appropriate?

Transferring the freehold or a longer lease (20 years or more) of library buildings into the ownership of legally constituted community groups can open up new possibilities for those groups and also result in improvements to the fabric and layout of the buildings. Local business rates (and therefore running costs) will be lower if the groups are set up as charities or the local authority applies discretionary rate relief.

An asset can provide a basis for fund-raising and investment by the community group. As such, it can be an important factor in boosting the prospects for future financial sustainability. A change of management can also provide an impetus for new ideas and support for the library. If there is an 'asset lock' with the new community owners, it also means that the benefit of the building will always be retained for a local social/community purpose.

Library buildings form part of a local authority's estate and often fall within a wider asset management plan. A growing number of local authorities have been recognising that community asset transfer can form an important part of their strategic asset management. Considering the future of library buildings may therefore be best undertaken as part of a wider review – not only of the library service but also of the local authority's assets more generally. Community asset transfer may also work best when part of a planned programme, not just as an ad hoc process for an individual building. Plans for asset rationalisation and plans for service transformation also need to be co-ordinated and synchronised.

In considering the desirability of Community Asset Transfer, a local authority would need to:

- Establish whether it has a community asset transfer strategy and ensure this is adhered to

- Understand and communicate the physical condition of its library buildings and the running costs

- Be clear about the present ownership status of the buildings (they are not always owned by the local authority) and any restrictive conditions

- Ensure that it only transfers assets to relevant and capable community organisations (to assist this, external expert support is available to support communities in transition processes and in developing business plans)

- Ensure that all relevant departments within the authority support the transfer – including legal, financial and property services

If it is not appropriate to transfer a building into community ownership at the outset of a community library's life, it may be appropriate at a later stage of development, so the timing of any transfers is worth considering. Our research found that approximately one in six community libraries (current and planned) include discounted asset transfer at their inception, which is over 60 libraries in total, but still only a minority of all community libraries.

It is important to note that the transfer of ownership of a building is not the same process as the procurement of a public service, and is provided for differently in legal terms. A common approach to implementing such a transfer is to issue an open and transparent call for expressions of interest from local community groups, then shortlist the most promising proposals and seek more detailed submissions, which are then assessed through a robust and transparent process.

Many similar transfers have been concluded successfully in recent years, and professional expertise is available to assist councils and communities with such processes – including from the Asset Transfer Unit (see later for contact details).

Figure E3
Example of community asset transfers

Grappenhall Library, Warrington

Transferring a library building into the ownership of a new community group

Grappenhall library, a small library, was selected for closure after a review and local public consultation. Warrington Borough Council invited expressions of interest from local community organisations to take over the building. A workshop was held for these community organisations to brief them on the proposed process. Interested groups were then required to set out their aspirations for the building in expressions of interest. There was no expectation by the Council that it would necessarily continue to be used as a library. The Council continued to maintain the building while its future was determined.

Having worked on other community asset transfers, supported by Locality, the Council had experience, an asset transfer team, a toolkit for assessing the suitability of organisations to take ownership of assets and a protocol to guide the process of transfer. The Council scored the expressions of interest it received and then met with successful bidders.

No pre-existing community group wished to take over the library building. However, in the course of several public meetings about the library's future, a group of like-minded people came together around a shared desire to keep the library open. They included a number of professionals – including a lawyer, an accountant and a librarian. Having established a steering group, the new group 'Friends of Grappenhall Library' worked together to put together a proposal for the library. They have subsequently established a company limited by guarantee and secured charitable status for it. The Council supported the group at each stage of the process, including professional advice on the running of a public service.

The library building was transferred in December 2011 via a licence (pending finalisation of the lease) with a peppercorn rent, with the Council retaining the freehold. The process took about six months. The library reopened as an independent community library in February 2012 and now has 50 active volunteers, 5,500 books and similar opening hours to before. It has plans to extend its services.

Stage 2: Managing change

How can we engage and involve local people?

Managing significant changes in services that are as valued as library services is clearly a challenge. Change processes require officers and members to work together, they require leadership from council members, and they require meaningful consultation and discussion with both library staff and with the public.

Councils will need to consult fully with library staff and their representatives on the nature of any proposed community involvement and how this affects existing staff and their roles, the kinds of skills they will need and their working relationship with the community. It is also important to get staff buy-in and to benefit from their advice and expertise in designing changes to the service. Good practice advice from Volunteering England and the TUC includes the principle that volunteers should complement paid staff not be a direct replacement for trained library staff. Community involvement is about delivering services differently.

Evidence suggests that local consultation processes are more effective when they are meaningful, transparent and based on evidence, setting out the options for all to see. Communities want to be given genuine choices, based on robust and reliable information about the costs associated with delivering services, not given pre-determined outcomes – and they can usually tell the difference. They can often provide valuable ideas and local information if trusted with the opportunity to do so, and work alongside local authorities to help design locally appropriate solutions which will be supported.

Consultations can be staged over time, with discussions about principles and strategic options then followed by discussions on operational details and 'how' plans might best be delivered.

Figure E4
Example of local public consultation

London Borough of Camden

Local consultation on significant changes to library services

Of the £2 million savings target for the library service, £400,000 a year was realised as efficiency savings in 2011/12 without affecting the service delivered to customers. Of the remaining savings £1.2 million was to be delivered from 2012-2013 and a further £400,000 during 2013-2014 onwards. The Council's portfolio holder led a large scale public consultation to gather views on how the service might be delivered at lower cost.

The Council consulted library users early in 2011. The consultation included a survey, customer and non-user focus groups, public meetings and meetings with Friends groups and stakeholders. The survey was made available in paper and electronic formats. It was e-mailed to about 33,000 people on Camden Libraries' e-mail database, with one reminder e-mail. The survey was also available in 13 libraries, to mobile and home library users and in a 19 Camden service points. Library staff also undertook outreach work, taking the survey to people in the street. The survey was open for two months. The survey received 5,114 responses (2,781 paper surveys and 2,333 e-survey responses). And a further 1,069 responses were received from a separate children's survey.

The Council also ran a number of focus groups to discuss savings and the future shape of the library service. The focus groups showed different tastes and requirements among users; some consultees favoured a multi-functional community facility that included library services along with community, learning, children's activities and advice services; others favoured a move to have fewer, better libraries with enhanced study space, cafes and better provision of books and computers; others sought a community library model with highly localised provision; and some requested what might be termed 'retro libraries', i.e. quiet places with a greater focus on books.

Both the survey and the focus groups considered a number of ways that the savings target could be made and sought people's views on potential options. A wide range of options were considered, including the closure of different groups of libraries, reductions in opening hours, managing with fewer staff, increasing fees, spending less on books, etc.

The focus groups and survey respondents were asked about other ideas they might have for how the savings could be made. Their suggestions included selling stationery, renting space to businesses and other users, charging for use of the computers and holding exhibitions.

As well as getting feedback on options to make savings, the survey explored people's views on volunteering. It found almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents were in favour of more volunteers being used in Camden libraries; and 36% of respondents said that they would be interested in volunteering (with 74% of those interested in volunteering saying they would be willing to volunteer for up to 10 hours a month).

Following the public consultation the Council made a formal Cabinet decision on how to make the £1.6 million savings required. The options proposed and officer recommendations were developed on the basis of: output from the public consultation, a library needs assessment and an equalities impact assessment on all 13 libraries. The assessments took account of relative levels of deprivation, customer use patterns including travel, feedback on services that customer's valued, access to alternative provision and the local groups served. Based on this information 3 libraries were identified as surplus to requirements for Camden to meet its statutory duty for delivering a comprehensive and efficient public library service. A number of other changes were also identified to deliver the £1.2 million savings for 2012-13. These included, reductions to opening hours, changes to the management structure, a reduction in staffing levels, increased fees and charges and ceasing the mobile library service. Further reductions in costs will be made from April 2013 with changes to two more libraries, in order to contribute the remaining £400,000 of annual savings required of the Service.

Elected Members decided that whilst the libraries (Belsize, Chalk Farm and Heath libraries) would cease to be Camden public libraries the buildings would be offered, in the first instance, for community use – in response to public feedback on the wider community benefit derived from the buildings. The Council asked for expressions of interest from groups that were interested in taking over the three buildings in September 2011. The Council did not require those expressing an interest in taking over the buildings to run a library but in all three cases those expressing an interest wanted to maintain a library as at least part of the activities offered. All three are now community libraries.

Stage 3: Commissioning

How can we commission a community library effectively?

In a handful of cases community libraries are completely independent of the public library network, but mostly this is not the case. So, where it is planned that a community library should continue to be supported by the library authority in some way, and remain part of the network, establishing a clear set of expectations on both sides is good practice.

The examples of practices from our case studies suggest the following has been helpful:

- Leadership – ensuring that lead councillors are involved as champions of the process in both public and private, working closely with officers

- Support – providing support to those groups interested in delivering services, not least as capacity might vary significantly between areas

- Communication – regular exchange of information and expectation management

- Clarity – where no funding is being provided, a clear Memorandum of Understanding may be appropriate. Where funding is involved, using Service Legal Agreements or similar may be best to establish clarity about what each side is agreeing to do

These principles apply to all community libraries where library authorities wish to retain a relationship, whether they remain fully funded by the council and to be delivered by an established organisation or whether they are largely unfunded and to be delivered by volunteers.

What does a good Service Level Agreement look like?

There is a similar set of issues that needs to be clarified for each community library service, and which need to be clearly agreed in advance:

- Operational running costs and who is to pay these

- Staffing and who is to provide this

- Ownership and updating of the book stock (and other loan materials)

- Extent to which the library is to be part of the wider public library management system and how this works and how it can be presented (membership, loans, participation in special initiatives, etc)

- Provision of PCs for public internet access, and who owns and maintains these and provides internet access

- Professional/technical support on the library service and training

- Expected service standards and how these will be measured

- Compliance with statutory requirements and how this will be ensured

- Duration of the agreement and arrangements for any reviews

- Communication arrangements

The arrangements for ownership and/or management of property (including maintenance and insurance) also need to be clarified.

We have set out some examples of agreements here from the case studies.

Figure E5
Examples of agreements and arrangements

City of Bradford

Service Level Agreement with community managed libraries

The Council has developed a vision for its library services involving community managed libraries working as a complement to a professional library service but still as a part of its statutory provision. They form 'community hubs' where communities can come together to make the most of the space available by undertaking and accessing a wide range of activities, over and above those traditionally associated with libraries.

At present, 4 of Bradford's 30 static libraries are community managed libraries, run by volunteers. The transition occurred in 2011-12. The Council has established a Service Level Agreement with each one. The Agreements cover the obligations of Bradford Council, to:

- Supply the books and other stock and equipment, including computer equipment, necessary to provide a Library collection as detailed in Appendices. Such items will remain the property of Bradford Council and must be returned if the agreement is terminated

- Ensure that any computer equipment placed in the library by the Council is insured

- Ensure that there is a library delivery and collection service, at least once a week unless otherwise agreed

- Maintain regular visits and/or or telephone contact from a member of library staff to assist with any queries or problems relating to the Community Library

- Provide training in the operation of the Community Library and associated information technology where applicable

- Deliver an agreed programme of support activities and events that meets community and library service priorities

- Ensure there is a telephone contact available during operating hours

- Ensure reasonable computer problems will be actioned in accordance with current Bradford Council ICT guidelines

- Ensure that all new documents relating to procedures and to training which are pertinent to the operation of the Community Library will be made available to the Operator

- Ensure that training is given to those operating the Community Library in relation to Stock Management procedures.

It also covers the obligations of the 'Operator' i.e. the group running the library, to:

- Maintain an accurate record of items loaned from the Library collection and returned to the library and other relevant statistics (visits, activity sessions, etc)

- Promote the library within the local community

- Welcome all Library users and assist them with enquiries, accessing their account on line and basic library transactions (loan and return of materials)

- Forward any customer complaints relating to library stock and services to a named library manager

- Ensure that all Library facilities are available to actual and potential users during advertised opening times.

- Agree any changes to opening times hours in negotiation/discussion with Bradford Council.

- Ensure that any public access computers are switched on and available during agreed opening hours.

- Ensure the Library space is clean, tidy, safe and welcoming

- Ensure that any faults with the computers are reported to the contact telephone number immediately and recorded in the fault log for monitoring purposes

- Provide a named contact person(s) to liaise with the Bradford Libraries and communicate with volunteers

- Ensure that all volunteers are CRB checked

- Agree to participate in any library surveys or statistical collections undertaken by Bradford Council

- Ensure items awaiting the van delivery service are packed, labelled and placed at agreed collection point according to instructions

- Ensure that legal requirements are adhered to such as compliance with relevant legislation e.g. Disabled Persons Act, Health and Safety, Data Protection and Human Rights legislation,

- Ensure that there is public liability insurance for damage caused by Library equipment supplied by the Bradford Council, and indemnify Bradford Council against any claims made which are due to the negligence of the operator.

A review of the arrangements will take place after a full year of operation.

Volunteers are also trained by the Council. The Council has a Branch Libraries Development Officer who supports the community libraries and works with volunteer coordinators and holds quarterly meetings. Each of the community libraries also has a local 'link library' that provides support on queries, reservations and fines when required. More specialised support, e.g. on summer reading challenge, is available from specialist development officers.

Buckinghamshire

Resource Agreements for community partnership libraries

In Buckinghamshire the library service has moved to a 'county and community' model, with 9 large county libraries now complemented by 14 smaller community partnership libraries. The community libraries operate in different ways – some are still run by the County Council and have library staff within them, but others are leased to a local organisation and have no paid staff within them.

The smaller community partnership libraries all have clear five year Resource Agreements with the County Council which include obligations from the Council:

• Provision of premises on a long lease at a peppercorn rent, with the County responsible for external maintenance and decoration

• £5,000 per year contribution for non-staff running costs

• Provision of book stock

• Connections to the County's library management system

• Training by professional library staff on how to use the systems

• PCs for library users

In return for these, the community partnership library commits to provide a core library service for free public access, to maintain minimum opening hours and agrees to operate according to certain policies, including the levels of fines, etc.

Supporting and managing volunteers effectively

Some community libraries are commissioned by the library authority and some include paid staff, whereas others are completely run by volunteers or have volunteers supporting local authority library staff. Whichever model is in operation, most community libraries currently involve volunteers in some capacity. Many library authorities and community groups have long experience of recruiting and managing volunteers successfully.

In setting up a community library, most have found it necessary to think through what roles volunteers will be expected to undertake, how they can be appropriately recruited and how they can be prepared for these roles. Roles can vary from management and governance roles, to supervising children's activities, to mentoring, to cleaning and helping with IT.

Some library authorities have adopted a strategic approach to volunteering and have:

- agreed key principles of volunteering

- created a volunteering policy

- agreed roles and responsibilities of volunteers

- provided training

- provided ongoing access to professional advice

Many councils who have developed a partnership approach with communities have also structured the professional support that they provide to reflect the new approach – for example in employing a Development Officer to support community libraries – and have thought through which skills their staff may need to enhance to play new roles. Where professional paid staff and volunteers are to work alongside each other, it is also important to consult with those staff and their representatives on the nature of those volunteering roles. (Advice exists on this – as referenced at the end of this report.)

Some examples of practice from our case studies are set out here.

Figure E6
Involving volunteers effectively

North Yorkshire

Involving volunteers effectively

The County Council had been experimenting with community managed libraries before the present spending squeeze, but has since accelerated its plans. There are different models of library now and volunteers are involved in most libraries. For the community managed libraries, the Council provides a range of support:

- Monthly visits to each library by a Service Development Officer to help with any problems

- Ensure there is regular contact with another more established library

- Provide training for volunteers in the operation of the library (all libraries use self-service RFID technology)

- Provide a Volunteers Handbook, setting out lots of useful information in one place

   Each library has a volunteer co-ordinator who helps to recruit volunteers and draws up a rota. They have two volunteers in the library whenever it is open, and two back up volunteers for each shift.

The community group have signed an agreement with the council and also have obligations, including:

- Maintaining library quality standards

- Complying with all relevant statutory provisions – such as health and safety at work and equalities

- Ensuring that volunteers are CRB checked

- Ensuring that volunteers are aware of their responsibilities and receive appropriate training

Northamptonshire

Volunteering as a two-way process

Local Friends groups have been operating in Northamptonshire for a number of years and provide a focus around which community support is offered to libraries; in addition individuals can and do subscribe as Friends. Furthermore, individuals may volunteer to support the library service directly without going through a third party, such as a Friends group; they can do this via the Service's website.

As part of the Council's consultation on the future of its Library and Information Service, a survey was undertaken. It found 82% of respondents said that they would like to donate to the Service and 50% said they would like to volunteer to support the Service; demonstrating strong local commitment to maintaining and developing the service.

The local authority continues to fund the service, albeit on a reduced basis, with volunteers providing add-on, wraparound support. Professional library staff operate in all 36 libraries with clear, distinct and complementary role descriptions for paid staff and for volunteers. There are currently:

- 33 different role descriptions for volunteers in the library service; the roles are distinct from those of paid staff and offer a diverse range of opportunities from gardening to reading to children

- 820 volunteers supporting the library service

- 26 friends groups supporting libraries with around 800 members, each paying £7.00 a year with benefits in terms of free reservations and so on; Friends groups have a degree of local autonomy in how they raise funds for their library, one library has a 'sponsorship deal' with a local estate agent that makes a donation for each house they sell in the area – this is, in part, due to the library's 'amenity value' that helps make houses in the area attractive to buyers.

The service has around 620 new members joining each week and 25% of new members say they would like to volunteer; thus, there is a reservoir of support to be tapped.

The Library and Information Service has piloted the operation of a 'time bank' in partnership with 'Changing Minds' in Northamptonshire; this approach helps build a greater sense of community engagement and a means to formally recognise volunteers' contributions. At the moment adult volunteers within the Library and Information Service are offered free adult learning opportunities in appreciation of their support.

The partnership approach operated by Northamptonshire County Council has led to a deeper understanding in the Library and Information Service of the different motivations people have when volunteering – from young people seeking to enhance their curricula vitae, to people with learning difficulties seeking opportunities to engage with the wider community. Thus, volunteering opportunities and relationships between the Library and Information Service and volunteers have evolved over time. The learning about volunteers' motivations has led to the development of an approach that sees volunteering as a two-way process, i.e. it is not just the Library and Information Service that gets something from the volunteers but the Library and Information Service needs to give something to the volunteers. As part of ensuring mutual benefit for the Library and Information Service and volunteers, there is an interview process, to ensure there is a 'fit' between what volunteers want and can offer and the volunteering opportunities available in the Service.

The Service is also looking to roll out the provision of 'work pods' for new businesses who lack office space and has established a list of volunteer business mentors to assist growing businesses; the Service has developed this approach with a view to ensuring those who receive assistance in the early stages of forming their business will remember the support they received and potentially offer support to the Service in the future.

Lincolnshire

A whole service approach to volunteering

In Lincolnshire County Council a whole service approach to encouraging volunteers across the council helps attract and support volunteers. The County Council's Economy and Culture team has recently achieved Investor in Volunteer Status and the library service has drawn on lessons learned from the experience of working with volunteers on museums and heritage sites.

Enabling a community library to be part of the local network

Most community libraries are part of the local public library network in some way and many are still part of their local statutory library provision. The public library service is relatively unusual in the strongly networked nature of the service – with borrowers able to order a book held by any branch and, often, pick it up and return it in any branch that is convenient. Many library services also offer specialist services that individual libraries want to benefit from.

Initially, some library authorities were concerned that community libraries may be difficult to accommodate within their Library Management System related to concerns about data protection. However, most authorities have found ways to ensure that community libraries can remain part of their system – for example, providing differing levels of access to the system for different libraries, or through the use of self-service technology. Technical issues have not proved to be a barrier for most Authorities.

The case studies highlight a range of ways that library authorities are pro-actively working to ensure that community libraries remain 'part of the family':

- Providing a single point of contact with the Authority

- Linking with a nearby library as a 'link library'

- Providing access to professional librarian support

- Retaining access to the library management system

- Enabling access to training

- Including them in wider initiatives e.g. Summer Reading challenge

- Encouraging adoption of common Council policies on IT, staff management, etc.

Some Authorities are going further and setting up networks of local libraries to promote the exchange of experience and know-how. A national community library network is also run by Locality, promoting the exchange of experiences, particularly know-how on enterprise and income generation (a link is provided at the end of this report).

Figure E7
Example of networked support

London Borough of Camden

Facilitating a new network of local libraries

Camden has started to facilitate a network of libraries located in the borough (which is also home to the British Library, the British Museum, university and commercial libraries, as well as libraries in schools and local museums). The network is one way of ensuring the new community libraries are supported and feel part of a wider library community that is able to provide support and assistance. Nearly 40 organisations were represented at the first event. The group is now exploring how best to facilitate discussion and the exchange of information within the network.

Stage 4: What next?

Our research has painted a picture of what is happening at the moment. But all of these services will continue to change and develop over time. Many community libraries are in their first year or so of development.

We conclude this report with some key points for consideration:

Rescuing a library is not the same as running a library

The skills employed by a group to take on a new project may not be the same skills required to keep it going. As community libraries seek to move past the first few months and years, they will need to consider what skills they require and develop a governance and management approach which is suitable for running a service. As the services develop, new skills may be required.

Services need to be financially sustainable in the longer term

Both library authorities and communities will need to be enterprising and open to the diversification of income streams if these libraries are to thrive into the future. Even libraries staffed entirely by volunteers need some financial income to cover running costs, etc. Where councils have provided transitional funding to new community libraries, careful thought will need to be given to how these libraries will be able to establish themselves as sustainable organisations into the future.

Low-income communities may require a different approach

Evidence suggests that low-income communities are likely to find it harder to play a pro-active and sustainable role in managing their local libraries. Yet these communities probably have the most to gain from library services. The support that some local authorities have put in place to facilitate the transition to a mix of approaches, including community libraries, has proved immensely beneficial. However, there may be a case for more intensive start-up and on-going support in low-income communities, or the greater involvement of existing community trusts, if community libraries are to become established and sustained throughout the country.

We need to keep learning

The phenomenon of community libraries in England is in its infancy today. There is much still to learn. We need to keep talking to each other. A stronger network of community groups and local authorities involved in community libraries would promote the exchange of know-how, facilitate visits and help to generate new ideas.

PART F
Further Support

If you would like further advice and support, a number of organisations are able to help:

Arts Council England

Further information on the work of Arts Council England can be found at:
www.artscouncil.org.uk

Local Government Association

A wide range of information and advice for local government can be found at:
www.local.gov.uk

Asset Transfer Unit

Locality is the UK's leading network for community-led organisations. Its Asset Transfer Unit is the leading provider of expert advice, guidance and support concerning the transfer of under-used land and buildings from the public sector to community ownership and management.
www.atu.org.uk

My Community Rights

Locality provides information and advice on how to exercise the new Community Rights – the Right to Build, Right to Bid, Right to Challenge – and how to access funding to facilitate the exercising of these rights:
www.mycommunityrights.org.uk

Community Knowledge Hub

Locality has established a national network for community libraries where advice can be offered and knowledge shared:
www.communityknowledgehub.org.uk

Local Level Rural Proofing

DEFRA, with a number of partners, has prepared guidance and case studies to assist local authorities and others in ensuring that their policies and programmes take the needs of rural communities into account.
http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=0&ProjectID=18130

Rural Services Network

The Rural Services Network is a membership organisation devoted to safeguarding and improving services in rural communities across England. They provide information and resources including case studies.
www.rsnonline.org.uk/

Action with Communities in Rural England

ACRE is a national body which supports rural communities through its Rural Community Action Network.
www.acre.org.uk

Plunkett Foundation

The Foundation supports rural communities through community ownership and enterprise:
www.plunkett.co.uk

Other references and good practice guides

Other guides are also available on relevant topics:

- ACE, Envisioning the library of the future, 2012 (forthcoming)
  (See www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/libraries-consultation/)

- CILIP, What makes a good library? Guidelines on public library provision in England for portfolio holders in local Councils, 2010

- LGA, Local Solutions for Future Local Library Services, 2012

- Locality, Understanding Community Asset Transfer, 2012

- Volunteering England, A guide to avoiding job substitution, 2012