

**Report by Fiona Williams, Chief Executive**

1. Explore York Libraries and Archives has just completed its first year as an independent organisation. It has been a busy year, tempered by the seven month closure of York Explore.
2. I have shared our journey with other local authorities at some of the Cabinet Office Mutuals Success programmes. I have been a speaker at a national Arts Council conference and have been talking and offering support to Nottinghamshire, Devon and Birmingham as they begin their own journeys. York is seen as a national leader in the public service mutual world. In the next few months I will be taking part in a roundtable discussion at The RSA on public service volunteering and talking about employee ownership at Durham University. There is considerable interest in this new way of providing public services and even in the emergence of a fourth sector – combining public service ethos with entrepreneurial skills and customer involvement.

**Highlights**

3. Some Highlights of our First Year:
  - Reopening York Explore with the refurbished upstairs and new archive pod
  - Completion of the capital phase of the Gateway to History HLF project
  - Archive roadshows asking people “What should we remember about York?”
  - Cataloguing of community archives
  - Our digital inclusion programmes have helped 6,655 people to navigate through the online world (see Annex 4)
  - Funding achieved from the Wellcome Trust to assess the conservation needs of our workhouse records
  - 8,001 people joined libraries in the first five months of 2015
  - 2,237 children attended under fives storytimes since January
  - 4,079 children visited a library with their school since January

## **Support Services**

4. We took the Council's support services for year one, during that time we assessed the amount of work involved in each area. Following some marketing testing, we decided to move away from the Council's HR and Finance support. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the CYC staff we worked with on the transfer. They made everything very straightforward. We have now agreed SLAs with H&S, ICT and Facilities Management and will continue to work with them. ICT in particular have been incredibly supportive. The SLA is complex and they have ensured that their support will enable us to continue to be at the cutting edge of a digital future.
5. We have now taken steps to bring the accounting function 'in house', and have also appointed an external and independent firm of accountants, BHP Chartered Accountants, to provide ongoing bookkeeping support, regular management reporting and accounts, and all round financial support.
6. We have just reached the end of our first financial reporting period, and although the results have not been finalised or independently audited, draft figures are indicating trading being in line with budget. There have been many 'one off' items in the period, which will not be repeated going forward. David Gladders of the Council's finance team has worked hard with our accountants to provide a year end position and resolve VAT issues.

## **Governance**

7. We now have over 500 Community Members and are building a database of how people want to get involved in Explore. We are much encouraged by the help and support we are receiving from the public – we feel that we are truly working with our communities in a much more meaningful way. The model we chose is working well for us and our aim is for everyone who uses our services to be a Community Member.

## **Children and Young People's Advisory Group**

8. As people under 16 are not able to join as Community Members it is very important to us that we afford them a real stake in Explore. We have established an Advisory Group that is chaired by Daisy Robson, one of our Board members. She has experience in this age group and she is working with our two Children and Young People's Librarians. They are working with three age groups, 0-5 years, 5-11 years and 12+years.

9. They are looking at what children's libraries should look like and how we might change ours to reflect the needs of the children who use them. Our children's Chatterbooks reading groups are linking into this work, as are our teenage reading groups.

### **Publication Scheme**

10. Although not subject to Freedom of Information, we are determined to live up to our value of openness and transparency. We have written a Publication Scheme and posted it on our website, so everyone can see our intent.

### **Friends Groups**

11. We have set up three new Friends groups at Dunnington, Copmanthorpe and Huntington. Local people are signing up to join these groups which are separate to Explore, but committed to support us through volunteering and fund raising. Our aim is to now set them up for all our libraries over the next year. This is yet another way in which local people can support their local library.

### **Performance 2014/15**

12. Performance figures for 2014/15 are hampered by the seven month closure of York Explore. Obviously, York figures show a huge reduction, whereas others show a marked increase due to increased opening hours and displaced users. York reopened in January 2015 and looking at last quarter of 2014/15 we can see a small reduction in visits (1.4%) and book issues (8%). We are looking into the reasons for these. Since York reopened, we have experienced a long spate of anti social behaviour from a group of young people. This has included threatening behaviour, drug taking and violence and led to us having to ban a number of them from the building. However, this did not stop them and we have spent a large amount of staff time dealing with the problems. For a while it seemed that there was nothing we could do, so we have pulled together a group to discuss how we can improve this. The group includes the Police, Youth Offending Team, Lifeline and the York Museums Trust and we are hopeful that the situation will begin to improve. We welcome everyone and banning people is a very last resort position, but we also have to consider the safety of everyone else who uses our services.
13. April saw the beginning of construction on the St Leonard's site next door. Hoarding has gone up in Library Square. We are working with

both Rushbond and Hall's to minimise any disruption to our services over this year.

### **Performance 2015/16**

14. We are focusing on three key indicators, visitor numbers, books issued and volunteer hours. Monitoring of the targets is monthly when each library reports on their outturns. Any under performance is questioned and libraries are encouraged to share successes. The contract with CYC calls for a review of performance in year three – 2016/17 and we are working towards that, confident that we will meet the targets.
15. The decline in book issues is being analysed by a group of staff using data from our Library Management System, Sirsi/Dynix. Two trials have been undertaken at Dunnington and Huntington as the two libraries with the biggest decline in issues. We stripped back all stock to the most popular types at Dunnington and implemented zones at Huntington as non-fiction issues were poor. Both went live in January and we can already see some improvement in the number of books being borrowed. This level of analysis is possible because we have so much data in our systems, but it is time intensive and requires excellent skills and experience in stock maintenance.

### **Community Hubs**

16. Libraries have always been community hubs with a range of activities and services. Acomb Explore is a good example of this. It is always busy and used by all the community. We are developing the work, taking it to another level by including additional services. This will change in each community, depending on local need.
17. Our plans so far are around a Health and Wellbeing Hub. Aims for this would be:
  - To provide access to services in local communities which are accessible, and flexible to people's needs.
  - To offer universal Wellbeing conversations for people in the community
  - To reduce loneliness and isolation through the development of a wider range of activities both in the buildings and in the local community.
  - To ensure that individuals can remain active and retain their independence sometimes with community or volunteer support and live independently for as long as it is safe for them to do so.

- To ensure that vulnerable people and their families have access to the information and advice they need, when they need it.
  - To enable services users to access specialist services more locally
18. Huntington will be our first development of this idea. We are working with My Health GP surgery (next door to the library) to develop a Health and Wellbeing Hub on the site. We will shortly be conducting a joint public consultation in the area to identify local need.
19. Some examples of potential service areas are:
- Health services – GP, physiotherapy, counselling, podiatry etc
  - Health information and advice
  - Employment – job club, benefits advice
  - Citizenship and Democracy – ward meetings, councillor surgeries
  - Community – walking club, craft club, Police surgeries, volunteering
  - Everybody Active – Eng-AGE, HEAL, health walks
  - Healthy Lifestyle
  - Dementia – reminiscence, reading group, advice
  - Mental health – Mindfulness, books on prescription
  - Financial capability
  - Adult learning
  - Families and children – parent and baby club, storytimes
  - Reading
  - Heritage
20. We are beginning to talk to other organisations about their involvement e.g. Sport and Active Leisure, York Learning, CAB. The work undertaken here will act as a template for other areas of York.

### **Volunteers**

21. We now have over 150 volunteers and they make a real difference to the service we offer. Below is a description of how they help Haxby Library to offer more and look beautiful. Bev Leymus, the manager at Haxby, has been working with the local community.

*We have a brilliant set of folk help out here. We have, of course, a core of regular volunteers who do the essential work of shelving for us but from a small start made by the*

*staff in their own time, we've inspired a really lovely couple to come and take over the grounds work. They do far more than the previous contract allowed for and with the help of a few other determined folk have made the library something to be proud of. Not a day goes by without someone making a point of coming to tell us how beautiful the garden looks, and how much more cared for and welcoming the library seems. With donations and some really cheap offers from businesses they've transformed the front of the building.*

22. The rear garden has been transformed from a bin storage area into a tiny oasis of calm with the help of people who just pop in with a plant. Occasionally they throw it in the ground for us, do a little weeding or pop in to do a bit of deadheading. It's really blossomed this year, with people bringing in shrubs and bulbs. It is a really special addition to the building. Our newest volunteer is adding a rock garden which will become a focus for storytimes in the garden. We have events planned this year that will incorporate the garden, utilising the extra space, and we also have a calligraphy tutor who is interested in hiring the garden area for her class.
23. All of our volunteers undertake day to day jobs for us, shelving and finding items from stock lists, and have begun to expand their involvement in what happens to the stock once they bring it to us. This has made the work they do more engaging for them and freed the staff team up to help in covering libraries elsewhere, spend more time helping our customers and get involved in planning events, such as the very successful Halloween and Harry Potter events. Both of which our volunteers have been happy to join in with. Their willingness to get involved has allowed us to hold more complex events than we could previously have managed, we had 6 activities available to the 20 children who came along to the Harry Potter evening, an impossibility without their help and the kids loved it. They've also helped events such as the Mint Yard lectures run smoothly and we think now, thanks to their help with our last one, where we had to rearrange the whole seating plans to accommodate the new pillars, we have it under military precision for next time. Our youngest volunteer is 14 and our oldest volunteer is approaching 70.

### **Asset Development Update**

24. There have been some significant building repair issues, notably the roof at Haxby which needed to be reinforced. We are in discussion with Property Services to ensure that any potential move is

considered as the buildings receive the repairs needed. We are always ready to investigate any opportunities to improve or share premises. The key opportunities at the moment are:

- In New Earswick we are continuing our discussions with Joseph Rowntree and the School about a possible move into the Folk Hall
- Now the Community Stadium has achieved planning permission we can really begin to plan what our service there will look like
- We continue to be involved in the project looking at the possibilities for the future of the Burnholme School site.
- We are working with the My Health GP practice to develop the idea of a health and wellbeing hub on the existing site of Huntington Library. Huntington Library is in need of a refresh and we are very excited at the possibility of joining with My Health to provide a new, improved service. The next step will be joint consultation to talk through the proposals with the local community. We are committed to keeping the library in Huntington
- The work on St Leonards has brought us in contact with Rushbond. It is proving a great opportunity to demonstrate how our spaces are great for business people in the city centre.

## **Partnerships**

25. We are building new partnerships as well as developing existing ones:

- We are now a Healthwatch partner
- We work with Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust on combating loneliness and improving digital skills.
- We have been invited to be on the Board of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust Digital board
- Our partnership with York Learning continues to thrive. We facilitate a wide range of programmes:
  - Helping people into work
  - Digital skills
  - Programmes for personal development
  - Holding the adult literacy courses at York Explore enables us to work together on the joy of reading.
- We are on the Digital York Board, bringing a focus on digital skills to enable everyone to understand and receive the benefits of being online

- We have joined VisitYork to promote York Explore and the Reading Café at Rowntree Park
- We are talking with Make it York seeing how we can work together in the future
- We are planning to pilot our Explore Neighbourhood concept at Lidgett Grove. The community there are developing a hub for local people around the Methodist Church. This is as result of the recent Joseph Rowntree Loneliness project
- We are joining the York Business Improvement District (BID). We want to work with other businesses to improve the city centre, develop the evening economy and help to prevent anti social behaviour

### **Toy Library launch**

26. This much loved service will soon be available once again. We have catalogued all the toys from the Toy Library and are now able to “issue” them just like a book. They are available to pick up at the library of your choice. There is a small charge for loan to cover some of the replacement costs. You can browse the library catalogue online and request your toy of choice.
27. This has demonstrated how our library management system can be used to lend any item. We are very good at cataloguing things and lending them out. It’s not just books anymore! Our next venture is to loan music scores for York Music Hub. The scores will be based at Huntington Library, making them accessible in a way they never have been (they were at YorkCraft before). We can manage the collection, lend it and keep track of any overdues.
28. The possibilities our system offers are limitless. Other libraries are lending garden tools and that is a real possibility for us as well.

### **Health and Social Care**

29. Libraries support good physical and mental health in many ways. We work to the national offer agreed by the Society of Chief Librarians.
30. One area of work that I would like to highlight is the national Books on Prescription scheme.
31. We are working with GPs, York Mind and other healthcare practitioners. The scheme supports people with book based therapy for common mental health conditions and has played an important role in helping to meet the huge need for mental health support. In a



very successful first year, Reading Well Books on Prescription has been endorsed by the public as well as by GPs, mental health professionals and government ministers as a helpful community-based mental health service. People are “prescribed” a book or they can browse the collection at libraries and borrow.

32. Reading Well Books on Prescription for common mental health conditions works within National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines and is supported by the Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Psychiatrists, The British Psychological Society, NHS England's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies Programme (IAPT), British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, the National Association of Primary Care and Mind.
33. There is now an additional offer that focuses on dementia and builds on existing library health assets, including:
  - Trusted and non-stigmatised community space
  - Digital access
  - Community access and outreach
  - Expert and knowledgeable staff
  - Accessible resources.
34. As well as programmes and services providing:
  - Information and signposting
  - National reading programmes providing support, learning and information, and creative engagement including clinically endorsed Books on Prescription (common mental health conditions and dementia lists) and Mood-boosting Books
  - Social, recreational and support activities that connect people, keep them active and engaged and provide targeted support.
35. Reading Well Books on Prescription for Dementia is available at York Explore (see Annex 3) to support the development of dementia-friendly communities and build understanding and awareness of the condition. Research shows that dementia presents a key national health challenge with a profound social, personal and economic impact on the estimated 850,000 people in the UK living with the condition, as well as their carers and families. The new scheme will also help the many people living without a formal diagnosis who may be worrying about symptoms and wanting to find out more.

36. Health professionals are able to recommend helpful reading to support people with dementia and their carers. People can also self-refer using the booklist to borrow titles for free from their local library.
37. The titles on the booklist are divided into four categories: information and advice; living well with dementia; support for relatives and carers; and personal stories. See Annex three for the full list.
38. Staff at York Explore with the Alzheimer's Society have established a dementia reading group that meets monthly. It is very successful and we plan to set up more at other libraries this year.
39. We have visited Sandal Library in Wakefield which has been developed to be dementia friendly. The simplicity of design and colour works well and we will be adopting that approach in York to make all our buildings welcoming for people with dementia.

### **Children and Young People Activities**

40. The popular Bloodaxe Reading Challenge ran again this year with over 400 children taking part.
41. The Summer Reading Challenge, The Mythical Maze, was very popular with 2,900 children taking part.
42. We have a number of reading groups for children and for teenagers. One example of this is the York Explore Teenage reading group. This meets fortnightly at 4pm - Approximately 10 attendees aged 13 – 14. Feedback so far is that they really enjoy it, there aren't many events for teenagers so it's great to have something they can go to. They got involved in World Book Day by writing reviews and sticking on the Reading Tree. It's encouraged their reading (borrowing more books). From a social aspect, they're from different schools and it's given them the opportunity to make new friends outside of school and with similar interests. They were also enthusiastic about getting involved in making the teenager/KS2 section more appealing to children of a similar age. Staff support by getting the discussion started, recommending books and being there to answer questions.

### **The York: Gateway to History project**

43. Explore remains committed to the delivery of the £1.8m York: Gateway to History project, funded with a £1,574,200 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £195,000 support from City of York Council. This project has brought together York's internationally

important City Archives and Local History Library for the first time in a state-of-the-art facility at York Explore in the heart of the city.

44. The construction phase of the project is now complete and the new Archives and Local History service opened to the public on the 5th January 2015. A launch event on Thursday 8th January was attended by over 70 supporters and invited guests, including Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Yorkshire and the Humber.
45. The conservation Archive store at York Explore now houses 2/3 of the city's archives in secure climate-controlled conditions, meeting the latest European standards for preservation. The first floor of York Explore offers a suite of public spaces for hands-on access to archives and local history, and for quiet study.
46. The Archives Reading Room, Local History Library and Family History room have received 27,755 visits in our first three months of opening. This sets us on course to smash our original target of 50,000 visitors in our first year.

### **Community Collections and Outreach**

47. The activity phase of the Gateway project is ongoing until December 2015 and supports 3 temporary staff: 1fte Community Collections and Outreach Archivist (CCOA), 1fte Community Collections Assistant (CCA) and 0.6fte Education and Public Programmes Officer (EPPO).
48. Over the past 6 months Sarah Tester, CCOA and Francesca Taylor, CCA, have processed 35 community archive collections. They have been sorted, labelled and made available to the public via our online catalogue ([www.exploreyork.org.uk](http://www.exploreyork.org.uk)) for the first time. This includes the internationally significant archives of York astronomers John Goodricke (1764-1786) and Nathaniel Pigott (1725-1804), as well as the letters of the artist William Etty (1787-1849). Other newly available archives include the papers of the York Lambretta Club, York Rugby League Club, the York Boy Scouts Association and the York Female Friendly Society.
49. They have created and delivered the Gateway to Your History archive workshop to local community and history groups, to support them in creating, collecting and caring for their own archives. The three workshops delivered up to the end of March 2015 have been attended by 34 representatives from diverse York groups including York Irish Association, the Friends of West Bank Park and Poppleton

History Society. A further 4 workshops are scheduled between April and October 2015.

50. Sarah and Francesca have also taken the archives out to communities through the Archives Roadshow in our network of libraries. The Roadshow has been to six libraries so far – Acomb, Tang Hall, Clifton, Haxby, Huntington and Dringhouses – and will visit New Earswick and Fulford in April. It asks local people to share their thoughts on ‘What York Should Remember’ and to explore some of the community archives collections. At the end of the project people’s views will be used to create a digital display at York Explore as a legacy of York: Gateway to History.

### **Education and Family Learning**

51. In January and February Allison Freeman our Education and Public Programmes Officer met with:
  - 38 EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) practitioners from 29 EYFS providers
  - 45 primary teachers from 38 primary schools
  - 16 secondary/KS5 teachers from 11 secondary schools and/or KS5 providers
52. 91 students from Burton Stone Lane Primary School, York College and the Independent Schools Partnership have attended an archives education workshop so far in March.

### **Family Learning**

53. Since January we have consulted with 137 families to help develop our pilot programme of family learning activities to launch in Local History Month in May. These activities will run through to end November 2015.

### **Supporting Family Learning**

54. Our Reading and Learning Advisors at York Explore have worked with Haxby Road school’s family support and inclusion officer over several weeks to build a relationship with parents with very low literacy levels who have never visited library or archives before. We have signed up 30 pre-school children and parents who weren’t formerly library members, and we are now at the point of arranging for them to visit York Explore. Parents will make memory boxes with their pre-school/young primary school children.

## **Adult Learning**

55. In partnership with York Learning we have supported tutors to integrate Archives and Local History resources into their literacy and numeracy courses. We have also offered work placements to three residents from Askham Grange, and a 10 week placement to a Public History Masters student from the Department of History at the University of York.
56. In addition our Archives Public Service Manager Laura Yeoman organised an open weekend for York Resident's Festival, giving tours of the new archive store and facilities to 79 visitors. She has also hosted 12 tours providing 179 people with an introduction to Archives and Local History.

## **Supporting City of York Council**

57. Explore has continued to service the information needs of City of York Council, and to support democratic accountability through Freedom of Information. Since October 2015 our Archivist for Civic and Public Records Justine Winstanley-Brown has responded to 18 enquiries from Council officers from Legal, Property, Planning and Democratic Services. She has also supported officers to respond to a Freedom of Information request, and provided advice to the Coroner's Office on two occasions. She provided a bespoke tour of the Archives for 14 members of staff from the Registry Office, to help them to understand how archives could support them in answering enquiries from the public.

## **Working with others**

58. Four key documents from the late 15th century, including the York Freeman's Register (1272-1688), are currently on loan to the York Museums Trust for their exhibition Richard III: Man and Myth. Our City Archivist Victoria Hoyle contributed towards the research of the exhibition, and participated in the events to commemorate Richard's re-interment on 26th March.
59. Also March 2015 Victoria was successful in a bid to the Wellcome Trust for a scoping award to support the development of a project focused on the York Workhouse and Poor Law Union records (1835-1963). The award of £11,000 will be spent in developing a bid for the October round of applications, with the proposed two-year project to start in April 2016.

## Abbreviations

BID	Business Improvement District
CCA	Community Collections Assistant
CCOA	Community Collections and Outreach Archivist
EPPO	Education and Public Programmes Officer
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
IAPT	Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
RSA	Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce