

21st Century Learning: 21st Century Libraries

Background

The DCMS' ten year vision, Framework for the Future, puts the promotion of learning at the heart of public libraries' modern mission. Whilst libraries have always supported both formal and informal learning through their stock, study space, information provision and promotion of reading; this document both highlights their role and requires it to be developed.

Adult and Community Education is at a crossroads. There is a clear demand for learning for personal and community development. In addition to this the post 19 sector has been set the challenge of engaging those learners who have not benefited from an extended education and those who have poor basic skills and lack of formal qualifications.

Recognising these facts, the Library Service and Adult and Community Education have been working together to build a joint strategy that begins with the Learning City concept in the Community Strategy (York: A City Making History) and the Council Plan and is delivered through the Lifelong Learning and Leisure Plan.

The Vision

The vision is to develop library learning centres. This concept will combine and build on the traditional strengths of both services enabling everyone to move between informal and formal learning, not in a linear manner, but combining a set of styles to meet their needs. These centres will facilitate the delivery of community based learning. Following from this the vision is to create a new library service with the replacement and modernisation of buildings into a network of three tiers:

Tier One - City Library Learning Centre as a flagship offering a wide range of services.

Tier Two - Five smaller Library Learning Centres situated across the City

Tier Three - Library provision at community level will be offered in a variety of venues in partnership with local people.

In order to realise this vision, the City of York needs modern, contemporary spaces, designed and adapted to meet the needs of a whole raft of learners. All service points will be fully accessible; information

will be easy to obtain; reading encouraged; research easy and learning natural.

The existing skills and abilities of adult learning and library staff would be brought together to put learning at the heart of what they offer. But also to develop more complex skills to work with both the general public, individuals and targeted groups in a more proactive, flexible way. New Library Learning Assistants will be multi skilled, with excellent interpersonal skills, a clear customer focus and an understanding of their role in supporting both formal and informal learning; supporting people with appropriate levels of intervention according to need. Those starting out on the learning journey, with less confidence, will have a named member of staff or volunteer learning mentor to support them, who they can talk to if they are struggling or who may contact them if they are falling behind or appear to have dropped out. Those more confident may use the on-line e-guide to support them. They will be supported in this work by volunteers from the local community.

People will be encouraged to use the buildings in a flexible way to access a range of services. Opening hours will reflect the needs of the community and will include late night and weekend opening. State of the art ICT will ensure that staff are not behind desks, but be available to help.

Both the buildings and the service delivery will be outward looking - linking with the surrounding landscape and community and drawing people in. The outside of the building will be transparent and visible - clearly signed as to its purpose and opening hours. Inside, thought will be given to clear patterns of circulation and spatial legibility and throughout there will be staff making people feel welcome and offering help in choosing books, finding information and understanding the different learning opportunities.

To illustrate this, the following is a journey through the new City Library Learning Centre

- **Transition space** - as people enter the building, they will find themselves in a welcoming space that is part café, part meeting space, part information point. Here they can decide which services they want to access or simply enjoy a coffee with friends or look at the latest exhibition. There will also be self issue and return terminals here
- **Quick Choice** - a range of popular fiction and non fiction plus the "just returned" books for people who only have a few minutes. This will be a bright, exciting area that encourages people to stop and look
- **Lending Library** - presentation of fiction will follow the lines of modern bookshop display. The books will be supported by innovative reader development activities with the aim of promoting the joy of reading. Presentation of non fiction will be shelved more traditionally and will support both informal, self directed and formal learning. There will be spaces to sit with sofas, chairs and tables to encourage people to stay
- **Reference and Information Library** - there will be printed and electronic material to support enquiries and study. This will be the quiet part of the building with study space that allows people to use their laptops connecting to the Internet through WiFi technology.
- **Community History Store** - making accessible the wealth of materials the library holds on the history of York and its people
- **The Children's Library** will be a colourful space that belongs to the children. Here they can make a noise and enjoy reading and playing. There will be books attractively displayed - fiction to promote the joy of reading and non fiction to support the national curriculum. The space will be flexible to allow for activities such as storytimes, class visits, painting, crafts etc. There will also be a crèche
- **A/V hire space** will be based on retail principles and would include listening and watching posts

- **Young People's Library** - There will be space for young people that they have helped to design. The aim of which is to encourage young people to stay and feel that they are welcome and it will include playstation console, lounge area and a performance space
- **IT** - In addition to WiFi technology throughout the building, there will be public access ICT positioned in different parts of the building to indicate different uses - in the café for quick email sending or internet surfing; in the reference library for study and longer searches; in the lending library to access the catalogue; in the learning rooms to support more formal learning. The aim will be to always be at the cutting edge of technology
- **Activities** - There will be a variety of activities happening in the building at any one time from reading groups to homework clubs. Many of these activities will be arranged and led by volunteers from the community - using the building as a space for people to come together
- **Information and Advice Point** - this will be a flexible space with a desk and a space for confidential interviews. The space will be used by a range of organisations on a rota system e.g CAB, Benefits Agency, Police. IT will link each organisation back to their base
- **Learning Spaces** - these will be a combination of separate rooms and spaces in the public areas that can be used flexibly for a wide range of formal or informal learning as needed. The rooms will be set up as state of the art learning environments with all modern facilities to make the most of blended learning approaches
- **Learning Opportunities** - The library learning centre will offer a range of adult learning opportunities, in state of the art learning spaces, designed with the needs of learners at their centre. Supported by a learning platform and ICT infrastructure, learners will be able to access material in the library using the fast broadband internet connection to view media that home surfing may not allow. There will be a range of services to support learning; miss a class and the lesson will be on the web; only want to attend once a fortnight then pick up the missing material from your learning account. There will also be a range of electronic self-directed packages; opportunities to join open learning sessions supported by tutors and learning from home

Below are some examples of learning activities that would be taking place on a typical day in a library learning centre

Each activity links to national and local objectives around community based learning and library service provision as set out in the LSC Strategic Priorities and Framework for the Future

Reader in Residence - Don't know what to read next? Too many books to choose from? All day in the lending library area a reader in residence will offer advice and guidance on books and authors.

7.30 - A bite of Spain. 30 minute brush up your Spanish for holiday, ordering your coffee from the café, and taking it to the classroom all in Spanish. No Spanish no coffee.

8.15 - Tutor available for interactive discussion forum for GCSE English Literature, using the webcam for those that cannot attend.

9.30 - Family Learning Programme - Keeping up with the kids at Key Stage Two.

10.00 - under five's storytime/baby sign/baby rhyme

11.30 - Chair Yoga for the over 60's

12.15 - Local writing group, (made up of some of the class members of the Yoga class), using laptops to prepare work for broadcast on the internet.

13.00 Lunch time Reading Group - open to everyone to come and talk about their favourite book. Led by the reader in residence

14.00 - Returning to work. Short 3 week session on improving your CV, interview and presentation skills. (Most learners referred from Job Centre Plus or from Future Prospects)

15.30 - Homework Club - in the children's library

16.00 - Access to Further Education - Health and Social Care.

17.30 18.30 - Just after work Pilates class

19.00 - A Level Law. A mix group of learners some adults and some sixth formers (the latter studying as part of their full-time programme).