

REVIEW OF SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

- QUALITY INDICATOR 1: ACCESS TO INFORMATION
- QUALITY INDICATOR 2: READERS' EXPERIENCE



HOW GOOD IS OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE?



FINAL REPORT: JANUARY 2016

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the Self-Evaluation and Peer Review of Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Services (SBCLIS) into the following quality indicators:

- QI 1 – Access to Information
- QI 2 – Readers' Experience.

The Self-Assessment was undertaken by members of staff within SBCLIS with each quality indicator being led by a different member of staff.

PEER REVIEW

The Peer Review visit took place at Library Headquarters in Selkirk on 21 January 2016 and was conducted by a Convener and two other assessors. There was one other in attendance and one observer. The assessors met with a variety of stakeholders including partners and elected members during the lunch session. Visits were also undertaken to Hawick Library and Selkirk Library.

RESULTS

The Peer Review Panel commend Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Service for being a particularly strong team and for the large body of work undertaken in the self-evaluation for the review.

QUALITY INDICATOR 1: Access to Information

The evidence presented in the self-evaluation demonstrates that there are some notable strengths in provision here, including:

- Books on Prescription;
- Strength of the partnerships with both NHS Borders and Community Learning and Development.
- Participation of the library service in the Council group on Welfare Reform and Universal Credits,
- Library representation on learning community partnerships.

The creation of a 0.6 FTE post on digital inclusion is a commendable development which is likely to have longer term impacts and possibly transferable lessons for other library services. The reconfiguring of mobile library service is creditable which offers lessons in maintaining a customer-focused approach for other authorities. The upgrading of the People's Network equipment and WIFI also demonstrated a good approach to strategic capital bids.

With these technological upgrades, however, comes the challenge of ensuring that the usage is monitored and evaluated (something that is already done regularly and systematically) and, crucially **that robust and clear evidence of impact** is gathered moving forward.

More generally, the Peer Review Panel would emphasize the vital importance of the early consideration of a mechanism for gathering meaningful and impactful evidence in project planning, particularly in relation to quality indicator one. The Peer Review visit demonstrated (orally) examples of very good evidence of impact and value of the library service. The capture of these in a more systematic fashion for the self-evaluation is important in terms of the library's own ability to demonstrate what it does and what difference it makes to individuals and the community.

The Peer Review Panel endorse the Self-Evaluation Report and with the rating given by the Library Service.

Quality Indicator 1 (Access to Information) is LEVEL THREE (SATISFACTORY)

- Provision where strengths just outweigh weaknesses.
- Individuals have access to core service provision

- Strengths have a positive impact on individuals’ experiences, while weaknesses have some adverse effects on the quality of the users’ experiences.
- Services will seek to address areas of improvement while building further on strengths.

The Peer Review Panel agreed with the service in their rating for the component parts of Quality Indicator 3:

	Self-Evaluation rating (1-6)	Peer Review rating (1-6)
3.1 Stimulating and motivating learning environment.	4	4
3.2 Lifelong Learning opportunities in the library and in partnership with others.	4	5
3.3 Provision and support for all learners.	3	3

Quality Indicator	Self-Evaluation rating (1-6)	Peer Review rating (1-6)
QI 1 – Access to Information	3	3

QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Readers’ Experience

The evidence presented in the self-evaluation again demonstrates that there are notable strengths in provision here, including:

- Successful partnerships with a range of local and national organisations;
- The Heart of Hawick Children’s Book Award represent an excellent example of these partnerships as do the links with the Book Festival and the Science Festival;
- Keep the Home Fires Burning and other local history based initiatives;
- The Reader in Residence was a good and positive initiative demonstrating impact in some otherwise “hard-to-reach” demographic groups;
- Multiple approaches adopted in the stock selection process.

Although there was considerable evidence of impact, the Panel would reiterate the importance of early planning of gathering impact evidence in projects. Examples may including the impact of healthy reading initiatives or the impact that staff continuous professional development and training has on service delivery and development. The incorporation of feedback (positive or otherwise) from users and other stakeholders in service development and planning could, perhaps, be demonstrated in a more explicit fashion.

The Peer Review Panel endorse the Self-Evaluation Report but the overall level should higher, at 4 rather than 3.

Quality Indicator 2 (Readers’ Experience) is LEVEL FOUR – GOOD.

- Important strengths that have a positive impact.
- Few weaknesses that do not have a substantial adverse effect.
- Some examples of good practice
- Services seeking to raise performance further, and addressing areas of improvement.

Quality Indicator	Self-Evaluation rating (1-6)	Peer Review rating (1-6)
QI 2 – Readers’ Experience	3	4

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel endorse the Improvement Action Plan for Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Service (Self Evaluation Report p15) and summarized below:

Quality Indicator 1 – Access to Information

- Develop Dementia project and supporting resources in partnership with NHS Borders
- Review and revise stock profiles to inform stock selection and provision, and develop SBC Collection Policy

- Develop a User/Non user survey
- Devise marketing plan for E-Resources to increase usage
- Implement SLIC digital participation policy

Quality Indicator 2 – Readers’ Experience

- Develop use of Social media for customer engagement
- Identify target Communities to increase the engagement of foreign language speakers with Library Services, and thus to identify and promote resources
- Review and revise stock profiles to inform stock selection and provision, and develop SBC Collection Policy.
- Stock profiling to be progressed for each service point.
- Development of distinct stock management and selection policies
- Refresh Feelings and Books (FAB) Emotional Literacy Collections
- Develop Young Library Ambassadors project in High Schools
- Identify Reader Development projects to engage young people, working in partnership with VOMO (Voice of My own) film-making project

KEY RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel, while endorsing the Improvement Action Plan for Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Service, make the following additional **key recommendations**:

- The strategic vision for service needs to be articulated more explicitly.
- Some important short-term priorities for the move into Trust status must be addressed:
 - (a) Ensuring that library service voice is heard in discussion at a strategic decision making level within both the local authority and the trust.
 - (b) Key ICT management issues require swift resolution.
- The development of Digital Strategy, as part of a wider strategic landscape encompassing access, resources, promotion and marketing, should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.
- Benchmarking with other authorities is recommended to investigate solutions to the actual and perceived barriers particularly in respect of digital developments, website, social media, evidence sharing and confidentiality issues. There are potential solutions which could be explored with other local authorities.
- Partnership working is commendable within Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Services with a large cross section of organisations being involved. Moving forward particular emphasis should be given to more *formal* structures to some of these partnerships including protocols and methods of sharing information, evidence, evaluation and impact. Early adoption of a project planning mechanism to set out methods for capturing evidence of impact and value is strongly recommended.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Peer Review Panel wish to express their thanks to all members of staff at Scottish Borders Council Library and Information Services for preparing the self-assessment report and for their engagement on the day of the Peer Review visit. We would also thank all stakeholders who met with us