

REVIEW OF ABERDEEN CITY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

- **QUALITY INDICATOR 5: VISION, STRATEGY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

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Scottish Library & Information Council PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE?



FINAL REPORT: NOVEMBER 2017

REVIEW OF ABERDEEN CITY LIBRARIES

Introduction

This report is the Self-Evaluation and Peer Review of Aberdeen City Libraries in the following quality indicator:

• QI 5 – Vision, Strategy and Continuous Improvement

The Self-Assessment was undertaken by members of staff within Aberdeen City Libraries (ACL) with quality indicator 5 being led by the following team members.

Support Services Manager
Young People's Librarian
Central Librarian
Senior Library Assistant
Library Operations Manager
Knowledge & Resources Librarian
Events & Programming Officer (until Feb 2017)

Peer Review

The Peer Review visit took place at Aberdeen Central Library on 22nd November 2017 and was conducted by a Convener and two other assessors. In addition to the members of the service's self-evaluation team, the assessors were joined by the Service Manager for Culture (acting). The assessors also met with a variety of stakeholders including library staff, partners and volunteers and wider corporate colleagues during the lunch session. In the afternoon the assessors visited a range of facilities to meet staff and view the service in action. One assessor visited Ferryhill Library, to observe a local history session; another visited Kaimhill Library, to see how the service operates as part of a community/school facility and another visited Tillydrone Library to see how ACL were engaging with the local community as the library relocates as part of a new community hub facility.

Results

The Peer Review Panel commends the Aberdeen City Libraries team for their support in the preparation and facilitation of this review. A comprehensive range of evidence was provided in advance of the assessment and the assessment team greatly valued the opportunity to meet a wide range of stakeholders and view the service in action.

Quality Indicator 5: Vision, Strategy and Continuous Improvement

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

- Strong Links between service plans and wider national and local strategies and initiatives.
- Clear links to supporting the Community Planning Process and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.
- A strong culture of ambition and innovation and a commitment to exploring new services and ways of working.
- An effective project planning process linking vision, strategy and outcomes.
- Clear evidence of working collaboratively with corporate and external partners to deliver improved outcomes for customers and communities.
- Training and staff development is a key strength. Staff are highly motivated and well supported and staff training and development is strategically planned for progression and improvement.
- A clear commitment to engaging with staff at the earliest stages as the service and the Council undertake a major programme of transformation.
- Excellent strategic support for Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- Excellent partnership with young volunteers.
- A proven track record of attracting external funding and of delivering best value.

Aberdeen City Libraries are clearly performing at a very high level. They look after customers and support and develop staff and the service is highly regarded and trusted by stakeholders. The panel was impressed by a number of initiatives throughout the assessment that illustrated services that were innovative, creative, of

high quality and clearly valued by recipients. Evaluation is a particular strength of the service; Aberdeen City Libraries can demonstrate the positive impact they have on people’s lives.

Some particular areas of good practice, evidenced during the assessment process, are as follows:

- Outstanding ASN offer incorporating strategic support, staff training and selection and provision of resources for children, young people and adults.
- “Reel Futures” programme provides an excellent example of innovation. PLIF funding was secured for working with young people to produce non-literary creative media that promotes libraries while offering participants the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills.
- Healthy reading offer has developed from a resource based pilot project into a programme of engagement in a wide range of health projects working with partners including health professionals and the Council’s Employee Good Health Group, that have delivered demonstrable positive outcomes for people’s health.
- First rate testimonials from young volunteers who are undoubted ambassadors for the library service and the volunteering programme.
- There is a strong commitment to continuously reviewing and improving staff development and a staff working group has been established for this purpose. The Library Assistant training plan is very comprehensive and a good model for sharing. The service has introduced an excellent online Staff Resources Manual and staff feedback is used constructively to review and improve future training events. This commitment offers added benefits in terms of staff morale and engagement
- ACL have made a leading contribution to the SCOPPL initiative to improve services and reduce costs collaboratively.
- There is clear evidence of targeted strategic intervention with regards to early years provision that supported outcomes linked to the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. This in turn contributed to an overall increase in visitor figures for the service.
- Evidence of strong partnership working with local law firms who provide regular free lunchtime or afternoon sessions on various aspects of Intellectual Property to help new business start-ups and small businesses.

As the Council moves from being a service led to a customer centered organisation, (a priority of the Transformation Process), customer engagement will be of paramount importance. ACL are clearly aware of this and have included this as an area for development in their Improvement Action Plan.

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

Quality Indicator 5; Vision, Strategy and Continuous Improvement is LEVEL 5 Very Good - Major strengths.

- A high standard of provision, examples of good practice to share.
- Any weaknesses do not impact on users’ experience.
- Services will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

Quality Indicator	Self-Evaluation rating (1-6)	Peer Review rating (1-6)
QI5 - Vision, Strategy and Continuous Improvement	5	5

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel endorses the Improvement Action Plan for Aberdeen City Libraries (Self Evaluation Report page 12 and summarized below):

Quality Indicator 5 - Vision, Strategy and Continuous Improvement

- Review and evaluate current models of working, investigating alternatives and proposing recommendations as appropriate.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the corporate support available – specifically in regards to Health, Safety and Wellbeing – during the Transformation Process.
- Review work with partners to ensure formal agreements are in place where required, investigate methods of establishing partner needs and capturing feedback.
- Propose new methods of seeking user input and establishing user needs – taking opportunity to utilise staff expertise and technical opportunities as appropriate.
- Investigate ways of ensuring training outcomes are embedded into service planning as appropriate.
- Revisit evaluation processes to incorporate RADAR methodology, and deliver updated evidence training to all staff.
- Investigate and propose new staff suggestion tool to encourage input from all colleagues.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel, while endorsing the Improvement Action Plan for Aberdeen City Libraries, makes the following additional key recommendations:

- Ensure that the vision for Aberdeen City Libraries is clearly articulated to all staff as the service moves forward as part of the transformation programme.
- Develop a Marketing strategy to facilitate and further develop and improve customer engagement. The recently appointed Events & Programming Officer will be instrumental in developing a fresh approach to customer engagement.
- Consider establishing a baseline survey of customer satisfaction and usage for core services that will help put customers at the heart of service delivery and allow progress to be measured and evidenced.
- Investigate methods of engaging non-users.
- Continue to build on initiatives such the Library of the Future Working Group to encourage staff at all levels to contribute to the process of continuously improving services.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Peer Review Panel wish to express their thanks to all members of staff at Aberdeen City Libraries 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.