

REVIEW OF WEST LoTHIAN LIBRARY SERVICES

- **QUALITY INDICATOR 2: READER'S EXPERIENCE**



HOW GOOD IS OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE?



FINAL REPORT: JULY 2018

REVIEW OF WEST LoTHIAN LIBRARY SERVICES

Introduction

This report is the Self-Evaluation and Peer Review of West Lothian Library Services into the following quality indicators:

- QI 2 – Readers' experience

The Self-Assessment was undertaken by a team of seven members of staff within West Lothian customer and community services team led by the Neighbourhood Manager – Service Wide Library Specialism.

Service Development Officer – Service Wide Library Specialism
Customer Service Officer – Livingston/Calders Neighbourhood
Customer Service Officer – Broxburn/Linlithgow Neighbourhood x 2
Customer Service Officer – Bathgate/Blackburn Neighbourhood
Customer Service Assistant – Armadale/Whitburn Neighbourhood
Customer Service assistant – Livingston/Calders Neighbourhood

Peer Review

The Peer Review visit took place at Bathgate Partnership Centre on 27th April 2018 and was conducted by a Chair Assessor and 2 other Peer Assessors. The assessors met with a variety of stakeholders including partners during the lunch session. Visits were also undertaken to “kids craft session” at Almondbank and a self-help group at Carmondean libraries by the Convener and to Strathbrock storytime and the Blackburn Lego Club by the other two assessors.

Results

The Peer Review Panel commend West Lothian Library Service for their team of enthusiastic and committed staff who have a collective aim to ensure high quality customer service. The service has undergone significant transformation over the past 3 years with the library service now within Customer and Community Services. It is acknowledged that the transformation has impacted significantly on the library service however staff report that they have confidence in the leadership team and their ability to develop and improve library services. The peer assessment panel were assured that the self-evaluation process was undertaken with due regard to the framework and were impressed by the breadth of experience of the group gathered together from across the service. It should be noted that the staff evaluation group underwent training on gathering evidence to demonstrate impact and value delivered by the Neighbourhood Manager.

It is evident that the authority has a strong performance management culture with monthly analysis of data and trends and conduct regular customer satisfaction surveys across all customer sites. One key area of strength is the use of Collection HQ stock management intelligence to direct distribution of stock and feed into procurement for stock.

The peer assessor panel share the concern expressed by both staff and customers regarding the sustained year on year cuts to the book budget with significant 50% cut to be implemented in 2018/19. While it is too early to really determine the impact of this on the service there was already evidence of the impact of previous cuts with library customers and partners reporting issues with both availability and quality of stock provided. It is worth noting that the Bookfund sits within the Capital Budget for the authority rather than the revenue budget which is unique in Scotland.

Quality Indicator 2: Readers' Experience

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

- Clear strategic vision for customer service delivery evidenced amongst all levels of staff
- Strong ethos of partnership working
- Sustained use of evidence-based stock management tools
- Wide range of differing activities available across local areas

The panel wish to commend the West Lothian Young Writer of the Year competition as an excellent example of partnership engagement with 100% sign up from schools across the authority.

More generally the peer assessment panel would emphasise the importance of gathering meaningful evidence of impact from as broad range of sources as possible. The service acknowledges that this is an area of improvement with an aim to develop a robust consultation process alongside the development of a more customer led approach to stock selection for the service by the end of 2018. The service undertakes benchmarking as part of a group of local geographic authorities however the panel would encourage West Lothian to seek out best practice for reader engagement and development at a national level.

The Peer Review Panel do not endorse the Self-Evaluation Report and with the rating given by the Library Service having found that a level four is a more accurate reflection of the quality indicator.

Quality Indicator 2 (Readers' Experience) 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)
QI2 – Readers' Experience	5	4

Quality Indicator 2: Readers' Experience

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel endorse the Improvement Action Plan for West Lothian Library Service (Self Evaluation Report p11) and summarised below:

Quality Indicator 2 – Readers' Experience

- Develop a robust reader consultation process to allow customers interests to be considered when purchasing stock allowing a more informed and formal stock selection process to be developed. This should include some focus groups, staff focus group, book group discussions etc.
- Review pop up libraries
- Develop more user-friendly feedback forms for activities and events allowing us the ability to better plan and target future activities.
- Develop a marketing plan in conjunction with Corporate Communications to promote the service, activities and initiatives and to celebrate our successes. This needs to focus on a strong social media presence and a potential online reading group.
- Develop a plan of activities and events to attract teenagers. Revisit and review current and past activities
- Improve the catalogue to make it more user friendly

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel, while endorsing the Improvement Action Plan for West Lothian Library Service, make the following additional **key recommendations**:

- Performance measurement is clearly undertaken across the service and this should be extended to include robust impact measurement. It would be useful for the service to ensure that benchmarking is carried out against a wider range of public library services to boost impact measurement.
- Develop a plan for the specific marketing of reader development activities taking a reader centered approach to encourage people to explore different reading genres.
- Investigate methods of engaging with non-users
- Consider the development of a stock selection and management policy for the service which links into community and library profiles.
- Establish a strong social media presence for the library service to widen awareness of services and introduction of additional channels for engagement with the wider community
- Further consider the support for book groups particularly in response to concerns regarding the availability of sufficient titles and perceived lack of staff knowledge
- Build on the partnership links to further develop the library offer to target groups including those with specific reading needs
- Benchmarking with other authorities across Scotland is recommended to investigate best practice in reader development and to explore potential shared solutions

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Peer Review Panel wish to express their thanks to all members of staff at West Lothian Community and Customer Services for preparing the self-assessment report and for their engagement on the day of the Peer Review visit. We would also thank all partners and stakeholders who met with us.