

REVIEW OF SHETLAND LIBRARY

- QUALITY INDICATOR 2: READERS' EXPERIENCE
- QUALITY INDICATOR 3: LEARNING CULTURE



HOW GOOD IS OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE?



FINAL REPORT: DECEMBER 2019

REVIEW OF SHETLAND LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION

This is the summative report for the Self-Evaluation and Peer Review of Shetland Library for the following quality indicators:

- **Quality Indicator 2 – Readers' Experience**
- **Quality Indicator 3 – Learning Culture**

SELF-EVALUATION ASSESSMENT

The Self-Evaluation Assessment was undertaken between June and November by members of staff within Shetland Library lead by Karen Fraser, the Executive Manager. The working parties were: for **Quality Indicator 2 (Readers' Experience)** Marghie West (Adult Services Librarian), Catherine Jeromson (Support Services Librarian), Chloe Tallack, (Senior Library Assistant), Josh Smith (Relief Library Assistant), Michaela Goodlad (Library Assistant) and Maelyn Marinner (Library Assistant); for **Quality Indicator 3 (Learning Culture)** Nicola Sinclair (Systems and Learning Librarian), Kaye Riise (Senior Library Assistant), Milford Georgeson (Senior Library Assistant), Louise Arcus (Systems and Learning Assistant), Gwen Williamson (Temporary Library Assistant), Jonny Stewart (Library Assistant/Mobile Driver), Sadie Simpson (Relief Library Assistant), Sandra Gray (Library Assistant), Selina Miller (Library Assistant) and Cara Leask (Relief Library Assistant). The joint working group coordinating activities, the documentation and visit was made up of Karen Fraser, Morag Nicolson, Nicola Sinclair, Marghie West, Catherine Jeromson, Louise Arcus, Kaye Riiss and Selina Miller. The Panel commends Shetland Library for the participative way in which staff were engaged with the *How good is our public library service?* review.

PEER-REVIEW ASSESSMENT

The Peer Review visit took place at Shetland Library on 14 and 15 November 2019 and was conducted by Professor Peter Reid (Convener), Mrs Sheila Campbell and Mr Robert Ruthven. The assessors met with a variety of stakeholders during a range of sessions, including a

particularly useful stakeholder lunch on 14 November 2019. The peer assessors had opportunities to see the facilities in Lerwick, including the public library, mobile and the school library at Anderson High School. In addition, a tour was organised to show the proposed redevelopment of the library building.

RESULTS

The Peer Review Panel was conscious throughout the visit of the unique and distinctive nature of Shetland, socially, geographically, economically and culturally and the concomitant challenges for the delivery of services. The panel commends Shetland Library for having an extremely dedicated and enthusiastic staff team and for the strong place that the Shetland Library in Lerwick occupies in the civic realm which is clear from the engagement that many in the community have with it as well as the evident pride and esteem in which they hold it.

QUALITY INDICATOR 2: Readers' Experience

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

- The commitment and dedication of staff, particularly the enthusiasm of those at the frontline, represents a significant strength and it is very impressive.
- A strong and well-developed service for children and young people with some examples of good, innovative practice such as the Intergenerational Bookbug sessions.
- The imaginative way in which revisions to the shape and focus of the mobile library service has been carried out. The review of the mobile service, since moving to one van, has been done creatively and effectively with a very user-centred focus at the heart of it learning to positive enhancements in the service.
- Good marketing for the e-book provision and the correlation with increased loans and usage is commendable and impressive.
- The library is very clearly valued highly and well-regarded by both partners and the wider community.
- The use of social media which engages communities and individuals and continues to be excellent.

The Peer Review Panel note the excellent and diverse range of services that are available in the public library in Lerwick. There is very good provision here, with a wide range of services, activities, events and programming and the extent to which the library is strongly-established in the community is evident from the positive feedback from stakeholder groups. There is an issue, however, with the equity of service across the islands and consideration of this, both in terms of core services and activities, events and initiatives need to be given in a structured and planned fashion.

Allied to this point, further consideration should be given to how the community libraries, located in schools, can become more effective public library spaces and serve beyond the school community. This should also consider how they might better mirror the range of services which are available in Lerwick itself.

There would be positive benefits in having a fuller understanding of what communities might want but currently do not get (or at least may find difficult to access or where the default is currently that they have to come to Lerwick for). This may involve consideration of some strategies for community profiling. The Peer Reviewers recognise that this may be something which, out of necessity, requires the wider participation of other departments or teams within Shetland Islands Council. The use of in-depth community profiling tools as a tool to make positive impact in the shaping of future service delivery was noted in the last *How good is our public library service?* review in February 2017.

The Peer Reviewers would, however, wish to reiterate points that were made in that previous assessment in 2017 that the the library possesses a strong sense of identity, reflecting that of the community itself, and there is evident stakeholder pride in civic realm as represented by the library. The library and the mobile provision are demonstrably held in esteem and affection by users but that further consideration to the wider community is important and in particular reaching those who do not make use of the library or its services and in respect of the notion of coming to Lerwick to access services.

<p>The Peer Review Panel endorse the Self-Evaluation Report and with the rating given by the Library Service. Quality Indicator 2 (Readers' Experience) is <u>LEVEL FIVE (VERY GOOD)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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)
QI 2 – Readers' Experience	5	5

QUALITY INDICATOR 3: Learning Culture

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

- Particularly commendable is the way in which individual support is given to learners; this is done in a personalised and customised manner and the levels of customer care given to those who use the service is very good and that there are some very positive aspects of the focus on informal learning.
- The reach of the library in terms of its marketing is strong, in particular the genuinely good and creative use of social media (as noted above).
- There are strengths in the approach to staff, staff development and the way in which the recruitment strategy focuses less on ICT expertise and more on the positive use of everyday technologies is commendable.

The Peer Review Panel take cognisance of the fact that library works in partnership with other learning providers, that care is taken not to trespass on the territory of these providers and, additionally, that the context of Shetland is materially different in many of these respects. However, the self-assessment rates the effectiveness of these partnerships as being a level 4 and we would encourage steps to be taken to make these partnerships more effective (particularly in the light of space issues discussed and in the context of the opportunities which will be afforded in the renovated library).

The panel would also highlight that the previous review in 2017 noted that partnerships, both formal and informal, have been created with a number of other bodies and agencies but that the library must be proactive in these partnerships, maintaining and reinforcing its areas of knowledge and expertise. In the context of this review, the assessors would reiterate this point. As with the previous review, the Panel saw and heard evidence of good partnership working but it is important to restate that partnerships need to be placed within a broader strategic vision and framework, delivering clearly delineated and pre-planned outcomes of benefit to the whole community as well as enabling the library to play to its own strengths and capacity.

The review panel note that the quality of the provision of information and communication technology has been noted in the self-evaluation document as being at

level 6 (world class). The ICT provision is very good in Lerwick but it is not at a level to represent world-class provision. Overall, the range of opportunities (noted in 3.2 of the Self-Evaluation document) represent the baseline which is standard in most public library services across Scotland.

The Peer Review Panel found a number of contradictions were apparent between the written and oral evidence about the way in which people come to Lerwick to access services and the difficulties in actually doing this from more remote locations.

The panel would highlight the following areas which need to be addressed, both of which are also alluded to above in respect of Quality Indicator 2:

- The feedback from users is very positive but the services needs to explore more fully how it meets the needs to the wider community (including those not currently using the library service or for whom potential barriers exist). The service should consider wider profiling of the community to understand more fully the needs of those who do not currently make use of it and building this clearly into its strategic planning.
- The service needs to consider the scope and function of the community libraries within the schools and the extent to which they serve the community beyond those directly associated with the school itself. In the context of QI3 this includes particularly looking at the learning offer in other communities to address issues associated with the equality of access to provision across the islands.

The Peer Review Panel considered very carefully the evidence that was presented in support of the Self-Evaluation Report for Quality Indicator 3 – Learning Culture. On balance, the panel feels that it is not, overall, at a level five standard and acknowledge that the library's own total scoring for the sub-themes of the indicator came mid-way between level four and level five. The panel would reiterate the points around equity and equality of access to services and the community libraries as spaces of all as key determinants in this respect. The panel would also encourage the Library Service differentiate clearly the evidence being presented in respect of one quality indicator or another if two are being reviewed at the same time.

The Peer Review Panel endorse the Self-Evaluation Report and with the rating given by the Library Service. Quality Indicator 3 (Learning Culture) is LEVEL FOUR (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)
QI 3 – Learning Culture	5	4

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel note the Improvement Action Plan for Shetland Library is respect of Quality Indicator 2 (Readers' Experience) and Quality Indicator 3 (Learning Culture) in the Self Evaluation Report (p12) and summarised below:

Quality Indicator 2 – Readers' Experience

- A building refurbishment project in 2020 is an opportunity to address customer demand for increased physical access to book stock, as well as the efficiency of our stock management and rotation.
- Building refurbishment is also an opportunity to improve junior areas of the library, increasing flexibility and comfort for customers.
- We will evaluate and assess time spent on events more carefully, as staff capacity is often an issue and we tend to over-commit. We need to help partners or volunteers deliver more of our junior programme, and ensure we always prioritise inclusion of people who are disadvantaged.
- We will work with other services to make it easier to achieve 'Every Child a Library Member' – e.g. we are looking at whether junior membership can be combined with Nursery enrolment.
- Continue to develop the mobile library service, particularly introducing more fixed stops which meet the needs of communities.

Quality Indicator 3 – Learning Culture

- The building refurbishment in 2020 will give an opportunity to improve the customer environment, including more quiet study space and better family areas.
- Another area for improvement is staff knowledge and promotion of the local history collections, which will be included in the 2020/21 Service Plan.
- Develop more self-led and peer-led staff refresher training, to strengthen our digital skills and awareness.
- Refresh digital accessibility audit and staff accessibility training.
- Continue to participate in the Digital Champion network, and locally work with partners or volunteers to give people chances to try coding or newer developing technology.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

The Peer Review Panel endorses the Improvement Action Plan for Shetland Library, make the following additional **recommendations**:

- The Panel would encourage the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan and recognise that much hinges on the implementation of the refurbishment of the library buildings in Lerwick and that the new space will afford many opportunities for the development of the service.
- It would be beneficial for the library service to open conversations about community profiling across the islands within other parts of Shetland Islands Council and to ensure that its voice is heard clearly in the survey work currently being undertaken (most particularly in respect of the school estate but, indeed, for any surveys of service provision).
- It is strategically imperative for the library (particularly in respect of Quality Indicator 3: Learning Culture) to build on pre-existing relations with *inter alia* Community Learning and Development, to review the shape, nature and scope of their joint working relationships and to plan strategically for future developments. This is reinforced by the potential offered by the refurbished library space.
- The library service should also open dialogues (or contribute to pre-existing ones) about the issues associated with the school/community library provision to ensure that the library can have a greater opportunity to deliver its very good services to communities beyond Lerwick. The library service can and should develop a compelling case for proper community hubs with schools where the library is a core element of the offering. We strongly recommend the nature, scope and extent of library provision within schools be reviewed and there be strong advocacy for what the service could genuinely aspire to be.
- The Peer Review Panel would emphasise the importance of mechanism for gathering evidence (including occasional anecdotal indications) of meaningful impact, moving beyond outcomes from initiatives to demonstrate what it does and what difference it makes to individuals and the community.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

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

Peter Reid (C)	Sheila Campbell	Robert Ruthven
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