



Borough Youth Forum Report
on young people's use of and suggestions for
Library services in Hammersmith and Fulham

January 2013

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1. Introduction and background

This report has been researched and written by Members of the Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Youth Forum (BYF). The focus of the report is on young people's use of and suggestions for library services in Hammersmith and Fulham.

We selected this as a research topic following a visit from members of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board, who invited BYF to select topics of interest from the board's annual work plan that we would like to research and seek the views of young people on.

We decided to start with researching and producing a scrutiny style report on libraries and invited the Tri-Borough Director of Library Services and his team to some focus groups, sought the views of local young people and the Tri-Borough Youth Council, as well as visiting local libraries and speaking to young people there.

The report includes data and insights from our 'key witnesses' including members of the Tri-Borough Library Services Team and young people, as well as insights from our visits to libraries and some reading and online research. After a review of the evidence and exploration of what is already being done to make services accessible, relevant and appealing to young people, we give our recommendations on what we think could additionally be done.

The report will be presented to the Council's Transport, Environment and Residents Committee Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Tri-borough Director of Library Services in January 2013.

2. Evidence received

The report includes data and insights from the following 'key witnesses':

Young people

- A focus group was held with Borough Youth Forum representatives and key professionals from the Tri-borough Library Service.
- Additional focus groups were held with 15 local young people (aged 13-17) and 10 young people from the Tri-Borough Youth Council (3YC).
- Questions were posted for young people to answer on the H&F Youth Involved facebook page.
- We spoke to young people using the libraries, in our schools and on the street
- We asked our young witnesses the following questions:
 - Do you currently use public libraries?
 - What do you think a modern library should be for?
 - Are books the biggest attraction of libraries for young people, if so which type? If not what else is?
 - What may prevent young people from using libraries?
 - What extra facilities or activities would make young people more likely to use the libraries?

Professionals working in Library Services

Key professionals from the Tri-borough Library Services Team were invited to focus groups with the Borough Youth Forum and 3YC

- David Ruse (Tri-borough Director of Library Services)
- Chris Llyod (Library Services Manager)
- Richard Grant (Library Customer Services Team Leader)
- Rob Symmons (Specialist Librarian)

We asked our professional witnesses the following questions:

1. How many libraries are there in H&F?
2. Approximate number of young people using library services?
3. What facilities are available to young people using the libraries?
4. What are the benefits of having a tri-borough library service?
5. How do you plan to keep up with modern technology, for example E books?
6. What is being done to make library services accessible, relevant and appealing to young people?

Field Work

BYF Reps Visits also carried out visits at the following libraries:
Shepherds Bush Library (Westfield),
Askew Library,
Hammersmith Library,
Fulham Library.

Observers looked for advantages and disadvantages of the library from a young person's perspective, its layout and provisions and how accessible, relevant and appealing they are for young people and got the views of young people using the library.

We also did some online research:

Library Services in Hammersmith & Fulham

http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Leisure_and_Culture/Libraries/

3. Review of the Evidence

3.1 Young people's use of library services

We wanted to find out how many young people there are in the borough and then compare this with the number of young people using libraries to see whether they were 'well used' by young people.

The recently published 2011 census information published in December 2012 provides population age by 5 year bands, 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and 15-19. At the time of the census in LBHF there were 15,537 young people aged 10 to 19. (10-14 = 7,621 and 15-19 = 7,916)

According to David Ruse, Tri-Borough Director of Libraries, Hammersmith and Fulham have around 11,000 children (aged under 11) and 6,000 teenagers (aged 11-18) who are library members.

Of the 110 young people we spoke to, 53 said that they use public libraries.

These findings would seem to clash with the popular notion that young residents no longer value or want to use their libraries and/or have turned away from printed books.

The young people who reported using local libraries said they do so to research, borrow books (many surprisingly preferred printed books to electronic), audio, DVD's and computer games, and in some cases to read magazines and newspapers.

We asked the young people we spoke to what they think a modern library should be. Answers included:

"Somewhere to study"

"A community area".

"A comfortable, quiet place to read".

"A place to study and learn without interruptions"

"Access to computers"

"A place where you can access the things you need for your education, particularly for those that can't afford to have them at home".

Reasons given for not using libraries included:

"Easier to use the library at college."

"Lack of awareness of facilities available".

"Can't use the internet in H&F for free if over 16".

"Computer systems don't have software that is compatible with what we have at school and college".

"Fines for not returning books on time, puts young people off".

"Excessive fines".

"Stigma of using the library- not cool".

"Have to pay for printing and don't give you enough time on an internet session"

"Computers are old and slow"

"Effort of going to the library- can get everything online".

"Never have the books I want".

3.2 What library services are available in H&F?

There are four main libraries in the borough: at Hammersmith, Shepherds Bush, Fulham and Askew Road. In addition there is a community library run by the Citizens Advice Bureau: the Avonmore Library and Neighbourhood Centre and a new school and community library recently opened in Hurlingham and Chelsea school.

David Ruse and Richard Grant explained library services in H&F to the Borough Youth Forum:

"H&F (as well as Westminster and RBKC) offer a comprehensive library service consisting of books, music, film, reference materials, information and activities for everyone of all ages, wi-fi, study space, learning courses and online services including e-books and online reference and homework resources and computers.

Each borough provides books, a safe place to study/work/meet outside of the home, computers, wi-fi in most libraries, learning activities, events and information but each also has built up large, special collections such as a Chinese collection at Charing Cross Library which has national significance. Other services include Local Studies and Archives, a Schools Library Service in Westminster, the Music Library at Victoria Library. Additionally, each library tries to adapt to meet the local needs

The employment and careers agency "Work Zone", which has very strong links with Westfield, is based in Shepherd's Bush Library. At Askew Road Library there is a Royal Mail Parcel Collection Office".

3.2.1 Visits to Libraries (advantages and disadvantages from a young person's perspective)

SHEPHERD'S BUSH LIBRARY



Address: Shepherd's Bush Library, 6 Wood Lane W12 7BF

Opening Times:

Sunday 11am - 5pm
Monday 10am - 8pm
Tuesday 10am - 8pm
Wednesday 10am - 8pm
Thursday 10am - 8pm
Friday 10am - 5pm
Saturday 10am - 5pm

BYF Rep, Leila Chetouf, 16, visited Shepherds Bush Library. She looked at the advantages and disadvantages of the library from a young person's perspective and also spoke to young people using the library.

Advantages

- There is a wide selection of books, easy to find
- Staff are helpful and very nice
- Many different study area, also allows you to take a laptop with you
- Modern, bright and aesthetically pleasing
- Snacks available
- Library is local and easy to get to (easily accessible by public transport)
- Good working atmosphere
- It has to some extent a good age range, children and adult section

Disadvantages:

- There is no place for teenagers to study only for adults and children, it needs a separate space in which teenagers can have separately and not disturb everyone else
- Not many revision and curriculum based books
- Should be a place where you can get water, (water fountain)
- Should be an alternative solution when you forget to bring library cards
- Some people prefer to sit down on a laptop rather than at a computer
- Limited time allowed on computers.

ASKEW LIBRARY



Address: 87-91 Askew Road, W12 9AS

Opening Times:

Sunday: Closed

Monday 10am - 5pm

Tuesday 10am - 8pm

Wednesday 10am - 5pm

Thursday 10am - 8pm

Friday 10am - 5pm

Saturday 10am - 5pm

BYF Rep Connie Campbell, 16 visited Askew Library and observed the following advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages:

- The Royal Mail Postal service is in the same place, so using the library is more convenient.
- There is a homework club for local young people to use, as well as a Teen Zone.
- There are coffee mornings, which are attended by young parents as well as an under-5s sessions every Thursday from 10.30am-11.30am (this is only in term time and tickets must be booked in advance from library)
- There are craft workshops for adults
- There is a book drop box for out of hours returns - around the corner from the library on Hadyn Park Road

Disadvantages:

- The library is relatively small and there are few computers, which means there is a limited study area
- The library is not close to any tube stations and the only bus service is the 266
- There are no drinks or snacks available for purchase
- They don't have the latest DVD's
- No workshops available for young people
- The staff are not particularly young which makes it less friendly to young people
- Opening and hours can be inconvenient for young people who often have things on after school (closes at 5pm most evenings).

FULHAM LIBRARY



Address: 598 Fulham Road, Fulham, SW6 5NX

Opening Times:

Sunday 11am - 5pm

Monday 10am - 8pm

Tuesday 10am - 8pm

Wednesday 10am - 8pm

Thursday 10am - 8pm

Friday 10am - 5pm

Saturday 10am - 5pm

BYF Rep Shahrukh Husain, 15, is a regular user of Fulham library, he observed the following

Facilities:

- Books
- Bestsellers collection
- Teenage collection (12-17 area)
- Large print
- Graphic novels
- Indic language books
- Books in European languages
- Books on Christian theology
- CDs & DVDs
- Spoken word collection
- Language books
- Music books and scores
- OS maps

- Unlimited WiFi internet access
- Internet access and selected Microsoft Office applications
- Photocopying & printing
- Cards, postcards and local history books for sale
- Withdrawn from stock sale

Advantages:

There is a separate dedicated youth area, with books that are relevant to young people for example, revision guides and books in different languages a possible key feature in helping those to learn their GCSE language course and read and write fluently.

In the youth area there are 4-5 computers separate from the adult section, this allows space for working with friends and so on.

Fulham library has its own wifi this allows you to use a laptop or tablet in the library, which helps young people to mark their past papers etc...

It is located on a main road making it easily accessible, to those who need to access it.

There is also a vending machine.

Disadvantages:

A disadvantage is that there is a sofa in the children's area which may not be needed there, however there is not a sofa in the teenager section, especially as some young people believe that a library should be a "A comfortable, quiet place to read" .

Adults are able to use the area even through it is dedicated to young people, which means that there is less space for those young people who want to study or use the desks.

Even though there are 4-5 computers this may not be enough for the use of young people especially as compared with the number of computers in the adult section and may not be enough especially when exams dates are approaching.

HAMMERSMITH LIBRARY



Address: Shepherd's Bush Road W6 7AT

Opening Times:

Sunday 11am - 5pm

Monday 10am - 8pm

Tuesday 10am - 8pm

Wednesday 10am - 8pm

Thursday 10am - 8pm

Friday 10am - 5pm

Saturday 10am - 5pm

BYF Rep Dalia Ali, 16, visited Hammersmith Library and observed the following:

Advantages:

- A good place for studying.
- Gives you all the information you need, a very helpful accessible place for everyone
- Some students like the quietness and atmosphere, better to revise in the silence

Disadvantages

- No access to drinks (water or hot drinks)
- New sofa's- idea came from young people liking the couches however they are worn out and no longer comfortable. The possibility of buying beanbags to just sit and read on.
- They still have 2003 software and computers.
- Not split into 2 sections, for groups and solitary people.

3.4 How are the library service trying to be accessible, relevant and attractive to young people?

We asked the Tri-borough Director of Library Services, David Ruse how the service plans to keep up with modern technology, e.g. the growing number of ebooks?

David told us that "each borough has 24/7 access to online information resources including subscription only websites. RBKC offers ebooks already; LBHF is about to introduce them as is Westminster. Westminster also offers e-audio books. Tri-borough also launched an online reading group in November 2012 across all three boroughs, which was launched by award winning author Mark Billingham, author of 'Sleepyhead'. The services also intends to develop an increased on-line presence with blogs, tweets and facebook".

We also asked what is being done make libraries accessible, relevant and attractive to young people?

He told us that "Homework clubs take place in all three boroughs; mainly for Primary aged children, but they could be expanded. We are looking at providing homework clubs especially for teens in the Maida Vale Area. We also offer CD's and DVD's. There are special collections of books aimed at young people, inc. Non-fiction revision guides, Manga, Graphic Novels and other Teen fiction (especially dark romances). One of the Tri-Borough Authorities (WCC) are part of a Lottery funded initiative called MyVoice, where 3 'Reading Hubs' have been created and events and activities organised by young volunteers for young people. Tri-borough libraries have also signed up to another Government initiative called the Youth Innovation Network which aims to generate thousands of volunteering opportunities in public libraries for 11-25 year olds.

4. Recommendations- what else can be done?

After Review of the Evidence BYF would like to make the following recommendations for making library services accessible, relevant and appealing to young people:

- For leads for H&F libraries to meet regularly with the Hammersmith Borough Youth Forum and the equivalents in RBKC and Westminster and for the Tri-borough Library team to have regular dialogue with the Tri-borough Youth Council (3YC) who meet on a monthly basis. The youth councils can be involved in/lead on focus groups and consultation of other young people, help to advertise services, select books and resources and influence redesign space and collections for young people. The H&F Borough Youth Forum have expressed an interest in being involved in the redesign of the space at Fulham Library and other libraries where possible.

Contact Youth Involvement Leads:

Brenda.whinnett@lbhf.gov.uk

Searnshaw@westminster.gov.uk

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- To extend homework clubs for teens (not just children) and reading hubs. Volunteers could be sought from, schools (perhaps through citizenship teachers/DVD made to be shown in assembly) local colleges and universities to support the clubs. Library Service could also work in conjunction with the Hammersmith and Fulham Volunteer Centre to develop these opportunities, as well as incentives and accreditations for volunteers. BYF have previously had lots of feedback from young people (aged 11-16) who find it really hard to access volunteering opportunities. One young person told us on facebook that they "would like opportunities to volunteer at weekends as a 'junior librarian'".
- Young people could be involved in the recruitment of library service staff (particularly those working directly with young people). The young people we spoke to expressed a preference for staff that were friendly, welcoming and had awareness of the technologies available, so that they can support young people to access them. There is a trained Youth Interview Panel in H&F that could potentially be involved with the support from the Library Team.
- Have copies of H&F Buzz (The Council's Youth Led publication) available in all libraries with details of how young people can become Young Reporters (Posters and flyers can be provided).
- We noted that activities available in the library such as arts and crafts, were only open to adults. We think the library team should work with partners to extend events and activities available to young people in libraries, to attract more young people, particularly in the holidays, that could be advertised as part of Summer in the City (Tri-borough Activity publication). This could include things like book clubs, computer game tournaments etc. Perhaps this could also include art and craft sessions that appealing to young people like graphic design etc. Again volunteers from colleges and universities could be recruited to deliver sessions on their specialism. The H&F Youth Commissioners could potentially support research of what activities young people want etc. Author visits and creative writing classes may be appealing, but it preferable that an author offers some kind of workshop rather than a 'dry' question and answer session.
- The young people we spoke to had a lack of awareness about facilities that are available in libraries now, but if they were aware they would probably be more appealing to young people (such as online renewals and e-library facilities). These should be promoted better. Perhaps a tri-borough awareness campaign, "Did you know you can do.... in your library"? Getting teens to advise on and help to promote services themselves is ideal. Partnerships with schools are seen as very important and the best way of promoting to teens.
- The separate teen facilities at Fulham Library were favoured by BYF, although they could do with modernising. We recommend a separate teen section and space, with access to computers and sofas/chairs, as well as separate solitary and group study spaces so can young people can choose to study together if they wish.

- “Trilogies such as Twilight and the Hunger games are really popular with young people but there are never enough copies”. (YP aged, 15, Fulham)
“Ensure that there are more of the most popular books”. (YP aged 13, White City)
- It is recognised that funding is extremely limited but lots of the young people we spoke to expressed difficulties with the software available in libraries being extremely outdated (2003) which can make it incompatible with software used at home/in school college. It was suggested that a couple of laptops could be purchased for each library with up to date software. Users could sign contracts to protect the laptops).
- Young people felt that it was important that staff give teens some leeway over fines or lost items, particularly books misplaced when they were young children. Some young people reported being afraid to go to a library as they have misplaced books when they are children.
- There is insufficient free internet use for young people over 16 years old, compared to Westminster and RBKC. This is unfair and as the libraries are now tri-borough, the same rules should apply throughout the tri-borough.
- It would be useful for library users to have a user ID, that they can in place of a library card in case they lose this or forget to bring it.
- Again, we recognise that there is limited funding but we feel that libraries would be much more accessible to young people if they had a section focusing on curriculum books, such as Sat's, GCSE and A- level (at least one library in each borough) and have a teenager section, where only people with GCSE's and A-levels students study, if they want a more focused atmosphere they can also study in the adult section.
- “Coffee bar/snack facilities” were also important to the young people we spoke to.

5. Promotion of the report

We will be presenting this report locally in Hammersmith and Fulham, to:

- 1) The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board (a review of libraries is on their annual work plan)
- 2) The Tri-borough Director of libraries
- 3) The Transport, Environment and Resident's Committee
- 4) The Youth Commissioner (who commissions activities for young people in the borough)

Acknowledgments

Thank you to everyone who helped with the report, in particular our key witnesses, your help is very much appreciated!

The Hammersmith & Fulham Borough Youth Forum



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