



CASE STUDY

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BETTER
the feel good place

Strategies for Re-engaging the Community with Libraries

- As applied in the London Borough of Greenwich and its library service

GLL – a charitable social enterprise

- Established in 1993, as a leisure provider with 7 leisure centres
- Libraries Division established in 2010
- First contract was the management of public libraries in the London Borough of Greenwich
- Transfer occurred in March 2011
- With a client who wanted a “different type of library service”

Communities in the Borough

- Like many London Boroughs, the London Borough of Greenwich has not one community – but many communities
- Made up of an amalgamation of the former metropolitan boroughs of Greenwich and Woolwich
- Woolwich has new developments in the Woolwich Arsenal and an older, less affluent area, merging into Plumstead and Abbey Wood
- The suburbs of Eltham and New Eltham
- More affluent areas around Greenwich – adjacent to regeneration spaces

Libraries in the Borough

- In 2011, GLL took over 12 libraries in the London Borough of Greenwich, each relating to a specific community (A 13th had been closed at the point of transfer as the estate was being rebuilt.)
- Initial focus was on the service as a whole rather than individual sites and their community relationships, reviewing:
 - Buildings
 - Books
 - IT
 - Staff
 - Activities

Stage 1 Getting the service fit for purpose

- Buildings – we took over one new library, others recently refurbished, some not good. Relatively small purchases of furniture and equipment.
- Books – ring fenced book fund so book supply became regular. New books each week had a major impact on staff and customers
- ICT – old and slow. Nothing could be done without a major injection of capital
- Activities – the start of a programme, mainly for children
- Staff – training programmes started

10 Years on ... Buildings

- Libraries should have a place for everyone – and look good and feel welcoming
- We consider who uses the libraries – and what they use them for ...
- We provide group study space, individual study space, a very quiet study space (a shush zone)
- We provide ergonomic PC chairs, relaxed seating, some for older people
- We think about customers with specific issues – we have dementia friendly spaces, we think about the needs of neurodiverse people
- The library reflects the community it serves

10 Years on ... Buildings

- And the opening hours
- Adjusted to suit changing needs
- And adjusted during the year to meet exam needs ...

10 Years on ... Buildings



10 Years on ... Books

- Good stock
- Matching local interests
- Monitored using Collection HQ
- And moved from library to a more suitable library
- Targeted language collections/ dual language
- LGBTQ collections
- And we'll get anything ...

10 Years on ... Books

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- Targeted language collections/ dual language
- LGBTQ collections
- e-books, e-audio, e-newspapers, e-magazines, music downloads
- And we'll get anything ...

10 Years on ... IT

- Renewed with capital investment provided by the Council
- And refreshed again ...
- Fast comms, efficient fixed PCs
- Reliable wi fi
- Printing
- Hublets for use in libraries and tablets for loan
- And for fun and learning - VR, 3D printers

10 Years on ... Staff

- Staff in each library know their local communities
- And we rely on them to mould their library into the heart of that community
- We listen to the staff
- We take up their suggestions
- We offer training so they can refine their knowledge

And did it work?

- 2010 - 2020, English public libraries:
 - Book issues fell by 46%
 - Visits fell by 33%.
- 2011 -2020 Greenwich Libraries
 - Book issues increased by 32%
 - Visits increased by 52%

And now we do it all again?

- Post Covid, our customers have changed
- And we need, once again, to listen to our customers
- And potentially change our libraries to suit the new situation and our changed clients



ANY
QUESTIONS?