PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE STANDARDS

Introduction

In 2001 the Government launched the Public Library Standards, they came into effect in April 2001 with a three year phase-in period. The aim of the Standards was to help create a clear and widely accepted definition of Library Authority's statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient service", and set for the first time a performance monitoring framework for public libraries. Since then there has been a significant increase in library opening hours, improvements to stock and ICT provision, an increase in user satisfaction and visits.

With the introduction of Framework for the Future, the standards have been reviewed to make sure that they reflect the new strategy and do not impose an unreasonable administrative burden on local authorities to deliver quality services to meet local needs.   The service standards set out below are the revised version of the current standards and they will form the first of two elements of the new standards. The service standards are a suite of targets that measure performance across core activities, the second element – "Impact measures" will help assess the impact that libraries have in contributing to achievements in the shared priority areas and particular local needs based on their existing activities.   The impact measures are still being developed.

Whilst recognising the general improvement since 2001, we are aware that some authorities have only just reached the public library standards set in 2001, or have yet to achieve all of them. We have therefore decided that the service standards set out below will continue to be set at current levels until March 2006.   We appreciate the efforts made by all authorities to achieve the Standards and would particularly commend those authorities that have already met them. Authorities will report their position against the service standards in the form of a statistical return as part of their CIPFA return.

Some of the original standards we have dropped or amended, but Authorities should continue, if they think it is worthwhile, to collect and monitor their performance against these indicators for their own internal management purposes.

This new package of standards should demonstrate how libraries are meeting the needs of their local communities.   We believe that the standards are reasonable and reflect the minimum standard of service that local people are entitled to expect. However, in the context of the increasing range of delivery methods open to library services, and in line with the principle of local discretion, we recognise that authorities are best placed to judge the precise needs of the communities they serve. We have therefore introduced a greater degree of flexibility into the way that some of the standards may be met.   We also acknowledge that when looking at authorities' performance against them, there may be room for qualification about why your own authority may differ against certain of the standards.   Clearly though, we would not expect any authority to claim special consideration in missing more than a small number of them.

Most of all, we want authorities to be able to use the Standards for a variety of assessments whether that is external, peer or as a self assessment tool to encourage the continuation of the welcome improvement we have seen in recent years.

These standards have been revised after an exhaustive process involving a wide number of authorities and other stakeholders and following a consultation of all library authorities and interested groups. 48 authorities responded. A full analysis of responses will be made available in due course. In summary, there have been some changes made to the standards consulted on in June on as a result of the responses received. Where suggestions were not taken up, they were still considered carefully and we are grateful to all authorities who have been represented or who have contributed in some way to this work. This task could not have been completed without your assistance. Finally, we will be continually reviewing the standards and we may in the future develop the service standards in areas not currently covered such as service efficiency.

A Best Value Performance Indicator will shortly be piloted by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister based on the library standards.

PLSS1- **Proportion of households living within specified distance of a static library**

Authority type	% Population within		Sparse authorities	
	1 mile	2 miles	1 mile	2 miles
Inner London	100			
Outer London	99			
Metropolitan	95	100		
Unitary	88	100	75	85
County		85		72

Sparse authorities defined as the 10% of authorities with highest sparsity of population indices. Source: Ward Sparsity 2001 census indicator.
(see http://www.libplans.ws/resources/links/default.asp*)*

Use of mobiles and other service outlets

All authorities will need to report on their position against the above, but Authorities not meeting this standard may wish to report on their use of mobiles and other service outlets to demonstrate, in a calculable way, how they serve the remainder of their community. On a scale of 1-4 a weighted allowance of 0.25 will be added to an authority's score in respect of this type of provision. Authorities wishing to be assessed on mobile/"other" provision in this way are requested to provide us with the proportion of households living within a specified distance of any of their service points.

Definition of how this is to be calculated

The number of households within a quarter of a mile of each scheduled library stop and one mile of an "other service outlet", for all authority types, should be identified, and the proportion of households living within the specified distances of a static library; mobile library or other service outlet, reported upon. For a mobile library stop to count the mobile would need to visit for at least 10 mins, at least every 3 weeks.

Those authorities that qualify as sparse need to meet the non-sparse target when the use of mobile or other service outlets is taken into consideration.

Definition of "other service outlet"

*Spaces which **allow access by the general public** and, as a minimum, provide a staffed Information point, stock loan facilities and a public access terminal linked to the Internet.*

Nb.   Organisations for a limited number of people or a closed community (eg homes for the elderly) would not qualify.

All types of service outlet, including mobile stops, are to be calculated on the basis of the library postcodes returned in the CIPFA Actuals Survey (we will ask for mobile stops in future years), and will include static service points open less than 10 hours per week. The distance measures are irrespective of whether the nearest service point is within or outside the administrative area of the local authority.

PLSS 2 - **Aggregate <u>scheduled</u> opening hours per 1,000 population for all libraries**

128 hours

This is to be based on scheduled opening hours. 'Population' is the resident population for that authority. London authorities may use a measure of 'enhanced' population, taking into account daily flows of commuters and visitors to the area. The figure is calculated each year by ODPM to inform Standard Spending Assessments. Calculate PLSS 2 by dividing the sum of individual service point opening hours for the year by the population.   All service points – static, mobile and "other service points" as defined in PLSS1 will count towards this total.   The opening hours of mobiles should only include the scheduled time they are at each stop, not travelling time etc., and other service points should only include the scheduled opening hours of the library service space.

Enhanced population is a measure of population served. It is a measure in calculating Standard Spending Assessments. The enhanced population equals the sum of:

1.   *Resident population;*
2.   *Average day time net inflow multiplied by 0.25;*
3.   *Count of annual overnight visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 365; and*

Count of annual day visitors multiplied by 0.5, divided by 3, divided by 365.

PLSS 3 – Percentage of static libraries (as defined by CIPFA) providing access to electronic information resources connected to the Internet.

100%

Percentage of static service points open more than 10 hours a week that have public access to the Internet.

PLSS 4 – Total number of electronic workstations with access to the internet <u>and</u> the libraries catalogue (available for public use through both static and mobile libraries, and other service outlets (as defined in PLSS1)) available to users per 10,000 population

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'Electronic workstation' means a computer terminal with access to the Internet and on-line catalogue.

PLSS5   Requests

i	**Percentage of requests for books met within 7 days**
ii	**Percentage of requests for books met within 15 days**
iii	**Percentage of requests for books met within 30 days**

Targets:

50% within 7 days
70% within 15 days
85% within 30 days

Based on counting the period from when the reservation is made to the time when the borrower is informed that the book is available.

PLSS 6   Number of library visits per 1,000 population
Targets:

7,650 in Inner London Boroughs (or 6,800 enhanced population)
8,600 in Outer London Boroughs
6,000 in Metropolitan Districts
6,300 in Unitary Authorities
6,600 in County Councils

There has been concern about how to count visits to libraries given the move towards multi-service provision on one site. Framework for the Future welcomes facility sharing, this is a positive step which can help meet community needs, and increase and broaden the library user base. However, capturing trends in visits is difficult if counting practices change and if there is no consistency across the country. DCMS, the AC and CIPFA have therefore devised a new physical visits definition.

All visits to a library will count, where the library is not multi service centre or has no other council services integrated into the space occupied by the library.

Where a library has other council services integrated into the library space or where the library is part of a multi service centre, Authorities should count as a library visitor only those who use the library element of the overall provision.

Where there is joint provision, activities that would constitute a library visit include visits for the following purposes: to borrow materials; to use reference or other materials in the library; to use a computer terminal; to request or collect information from the enquiry point (operated or managed by the library service); to attend a learning session; to attend a reader development activity; to attend a meeting (when it is organised by or through the library service, and whether or not it occurs during the library's opening hours); to attend an exhibition, concert or other cultural or community event (when it is organised by or through the library service, and whether or not it occurs during the library's opening hours), or to use the space set aside for library functions for any other purpose.

Counting Methodology

Ultimately, the method used to count visits is for authorities to determine although, for consistency and to improve the robustness of the data, DCMS advocates a full year count, if possible by electronic counters. Where this encompasses a multi-service point using electronic counters at a common entrance, some sampling will also be necessary to identify those visits that meet the definition above.   Sampling for this purpose and for those authorities that cannot undertake a full year count should be carried out in line with the latest advice on frequency in the CIPFA guidance for the Public Library Statistics Actuals return.

Multi-Service Outlets

DCMS recognizes the considerable efforts made by some authorities to position their libraries as community hubs, or to improve the popularity of their libraries, by co-locating them with other services. This aligns with the aspirations of "Framework for the Future". Although the physical visits definition above reflects DCMS' wish not lose the sharp statistical focus on the additional visits being generated by libraries widening range of activities, authorities should also report separately total visits to all their service points (including visits for non-library purposes to a multi-service space) This will not form part of the standards assessment but will inform the overall picture of usage.

"Virtual" Visits

Acknowledging the increasing use of our public libraries "virtually" or remotely", DCMS had intended to include a standard for this type of user activity. However, continuing definitional, methodology and technical issues have made this impractical at this time. We envisage that the standards will evolve on a rolling basis to keep track of changing operational practices. We will return to the issue of recording virtual/remote access in time for the next refresh. In the meantime, to give the fullest indication of public library use, authorities should report the number of visits (as a total number) to a library website to be defined as:

A visit occurs when an external user connects to a networked library resource for any length of time or purpose (regardless of the number of pages or elements viewed). Examples of a networked library resource include a library OPAC or a library web page, including those pages created by the library service to support the community – eg. Community online material. Include accesses from libraries' own service point work stations. In the case of a user visit to a library web site a user who looks at 16 pages and 54 graphic images registers one visit to the web server."

PLSS 7

% of library users 16 and over who view their library service as:

i   very good
ii   good
iii   adequate
iv   poor
v   very poor

     Standard suggested – 94% of respondents rate the library service as 'very good' or 'good'.

PLSS 8

% of library users under 16 who view their library service as:

i   good
ii   adequate
iii   bad

     Standard suggested – 77% of respondents rate the library service as 'good'.

The aim of these two standards is to give a top line indication of how users view the service. Authorities should continue to collect and monitor their performance against a variety of user satisfaction measures for their own internal management purposes and to reflect the consultation processes they have undertaken to inform any CPA, inspection or self-assessment frameworks.

PLSS 7 is sourced from the Public Library User Survey (PLUS) questionnaire for adults. PLSS 8 is sourced from the PLUS Children's questionnaire - an overall satisfaction question will be incorporated into the next questionnaire (the answers will be Good; OK, which will be used as a proxy for adequate, and Poor). Until Authorities have an opportunity to undertake a Children's PLUS survey using this new question, we will assess authorities using an aggregate score against three questions in the existing children's PLUS survey –

i   "I think the library staff are"
ii   "I think the help I get from the library staff with my homework is"
iii   "I think the help I get from the library staff choosing books is".

The Standard is set at the upper quartile of the existing average of those responding

"Good" to these three questions. We will set a new baseline once a representative number of authorities have undertaken a children's PLUS survey with this new question. We should emphasize that we believe that children are equally entitled to be as satisfied with their library service as adults, and that we anticipate that the satisfaction standards for these will be equalized in the near future, once authorities have had the opportunity to ask the new question.

PLSS 9   Annual items added through purchase per 1,000 population.

216 additions per 1000 population

These include 'Books' and 'Other items' which include audio-visual materials, electronic publications and other formats but excludes newspapers, periodicals and other materials.   CIPFA guidance for the Public Library Statistics Actuals return provides definitions of these categories.

PLSS 10   Time taken to replenish the lending stock on open access or available on loan.

6.7 years

"Lending stock" means all books and other items available on open access or available for loan. Special collections, however, should be excluded.

The count is based on books for loan including extra copies in sets and Audio-Visual materials for loan. It excludes reference materials and books held in reserve. This translates into the number of years it would take to replenish lending stock of books and audio-visual materials.