

Rotherham Library and Information Service

A vision to deliver a modern and vibrant service

The Rotherham Library Service Review

In July 2011 the Library and Information Service Strategy was introduced with the aim of improving the library experience for local people as well as defining future priorities for the service. The Strategy outlines the overarching commitment to provide a library and information service fit for the 21st Century. It outlines a Borough wide library offer stating the service will:

- Promote a love of reading and help to improve literacy.
- Provide a space where people can engage in informal learning, develop skills and improve their lives.
- Provide children and young people with a safe, inspiring place to learn, explore their creativity and find their talent.
- Support businesses and contribute to the sustainability and regeneration of our local communities.
- Provide welcoming spaces, open for all to use to improve their lives and their communities.
- Offer information and reading services that can improve the health and well being of customers.
- Bridge the digital divide acting as an essential point of access to online knowledge resources.

Since the publication of the strategy the public sector has been presented with immense funding pressures. The shift to mobile technology and the web revolutionising the way we work has seen customer demands and expectations change. In order to meet all of these changes, it was felt appropriate to review the service. Therefore the aim of the Library Service Review has been to define new ways of delivering a high quality borough offer in the most cost effective manner.

Service Review

We explored national, regional and local key strategies and matched this with the review experiences of other local authorities. As a result it became apparent we needed to undertake an extensive assessment of local need. In this piece of work we examined usage, performance and service demands. We reviewed all our available resources, including staff, buildings and stock. All of the gathered information was evaluated and a new model of service delivery was devised. These initial proposals were published in the summer 2012 for a period of public consultation.

Consultation Process

Inviting public comment was hugely beneficial and it offered an insight into individual and community wants and wishes. Collating all the responses has been a vital part of the review and the detailed reports can be accessed from www.rotherham.gov.uk/libraries or from any of our libraries.

Overall it was evident to see how all of our library venues are well loved and much appreciated. Positive comments were made about current activities and demands were made for increasing the range of services, specifically broadening our work with children, elderly people and unemployed individuals. Objections were raised in relation to closures and the changes of opening hours caused much debate.

A vast number of those who responded referred to their local library as the 'Hub' of their community. It was noted how the library is a one stop shop for neighbourhood information, as well being a safe space to meet and relax. From the consultation it was clear to conclude our customers expect a quality experience when using our services, a vibrant, bright welcoming space providing a modern environment with the opportunity for reading, activities, relaxation, enjoyment, free access to the internet, information and learning.

Developing a Local Library Offer

To shape a dynamic and confident local library offer we had to consider a range of priorities and practicalities:

Opening hours are targeted to reflect peak visitor times and are designed to meet the customer usage requirements of delivering a quality service across the whole borough.

Changes to Council policy in terms of deprived areas have emerged during the consultation period refocusing the borough wide offer and we intend to work in line with the council policy on supporting the *11 most deprived communities*. The service remains accessible to all, supporting the most vulnerable in order to close the gap between the most and least deprived neighbourhoods.

Links will continue to be established in order to *integrate local services*. The library service will see these developments as a seamless joining of council services and at a local level people can access a range of neighbourhood and information services from one venue.

There is a need for access to a library service in every community in Rotherham and every community is different. The shape of the new service makes best use of our assets and increases their impact for the benefit of all our communities. To ensure our services are delivered effectively and efficiently we will continue to engage with Rotherham residents inviting them to measure our achievements.

The New Service

Library	No. of opening hrs	What does it mean for the Libraries I use?
Riverside	55	A "flagship" for cultural services integrating community arts, theatres and heritage services. Targeted support offered to areas of disadvantage in line with council policy.
Aston	46	Work towards joint delivery of library and customer services. Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy.
Brinsworth	26	Explore potential for new build incorporating community management boards with Parish Council. In the meantime, continue with current library.
Dinnington	46	Work towards joint delivery library and customer services. Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy. Review in 12 months to assess impact of new opening hours.
Greasbrough	32	Review in 12 months time to assess impact of Kimberworth Park closure.
Kimberworth	20	Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy. Increased hours to support Kimberworth Park.
Kimberworth Park	Close	Provide a mobile library service accessible to all. Establish Booklink support for isolated individuals e.g. Home delivery. Increase of opening hours at Kimberworth to help support. Work with Partners to consider use of other venues for some activities in the Kimberworth Park area as appropriate.
Kiveton Park	32 (seasonal)	Same number of hours all year but seasonal pattern.
Maltby	46	Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy. Work together with Customer services to improve services locally.
Mowbray Gardens	40	Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy.
Rawmarsh	46	Work towards joint delivery of library and customer services. Targeted support offered to area of disadvantage in line with council policy.
Swinton	40	Work towards joint delivery of library and customer services.
Thorpe Hesley	26	Retain current number of opening hours. Work with partners and the local community to extend community involvement.
Thurcroft	20 (all year)	Hours distributed across full year in response to consultation
Wath	46	Retain current number of opening hours
Wickersley	40	Review in 12 months time to assess impact of new opening hours.

Delivering a Future Vision Now

To support service delivery to customers and to ensure the service on offer is relevant and attractive both now and in the future we will focus on the development of the following key areas:

Reading

We will ensure our libraries provide the right reading at the right time by creating lively and stimulating spaces for all ages in which readers feel free to explore. We will have a wide range of materials to satisfy the range and levels of people's leisure and study needs. We will create opportunities for people to share reading, from readers groups to book chains, author's events to websites. To ensure our stock is of good quality, well displayed, appropriate and provides choice we will spend £1.52 per head on books and other materials.

Information and Digital

Our increasingly popular web-based services give customers 24 hour access to online renewals, reservations, enquiries, information and more. We are currently exploring ebook packages and developing our website and social networking facilities, improving access to and the interactivity of services. Libraries will continue to be a place that people come to for information. Our knowledgeable skilled staff will help customers access the increasing number of local and national services available on-line.

Learning

Our libraries provide easily accessible local safe and welcoming spaces for community groups or individuals to learn explore, improve their skills and socialise. We are committed to providing high quality learning programmes as part of the library offer to children, families and individuals to encourage all ages learning and reading together for life.

People

Our staff are knowledgeable, helpful, approachable, enthusiastic and answer enquires accurately and confidently. As the way the service is delivered changes and the library offer is localised to meet the needs of different communities, we need to ensure the staffing profile has the right mix of leadership, skills, knowledge and commitment, enabling them to provide a high quality service.

Promotion and Marketing

We will encourage more people to use our service, more often by raising the profile and consolidating the image of service. This will be implemented through a sustained marketing plan.

And finally....

Our future libraries will focus on the needs of individuals and the needs of our borough and communities. We will provide modern spaces and vibrant services to support individuals and the community incorporating media, technology and developing a profile of multifunctional activities. As a library service, we aim to be a physical and virtual destination, encouraging more people to use us more often.