



Sharing Best Practice

Libraries: Supporting the Community

1.0 New Look, No Shush!

The Library Strategy, 'New Look, No Shush!' sets out the vision for libraries as central venues for local communities where people can meet, seek advice and enjoy a variety of activities as well as accessing essential resources through the web, archives and books. The aim is to provide an excellent service that is accessible, relevant to and used by everyone who lives, works or studies in North Yorkshire. The strategy has been developed in conjunction with service users and residents of North Yorkshire.

The strategy also outlines the Council's commitment to developing and strengthening the skills of staff to help each library become a hub for the local community. In order to be relevant and responsive and at the heart of local communities we will continue to work closely with a wide range of partner organisations to deliver a service that our County is proud of.

The Strategy was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including Councillors, Officers, Voluntary and Community groups and organisations plus the views of the public sought. The implementation of the Strategy is supported by the Service Action Plan.

2.0 Improving Library Services

North Yorkshire County Council is pressing ahead with the expansion of its library services and increasing membership. Over the last two years the number of active users of the county's 42 libraries has increased by 17 per cent. In addition North Yorkshire issues three million books a year, a figure which is rising year on year. It also spends £1 million a year on new book stock.

In addition, the county council has introduced a county-wide home library service to support the infirm who cannot get into their local library.

Work is ongoing on improving library facilities to enable the strategy to be implemented:

- The new library in Helmsley opened in late 2008 after a £175,000 redevelopment. It includes a dedicated children's area with comfortable seating and space for activities and storytelling as well as meetings rooms for hire by local groups. It incorporates many suggestions made by local residents during public consultation including a café area, accessible toilet and baby changing area and also benefits from additional state-of-the-art flat screen computers providing free internet access as well as new books, DVDs and talking books worth £10,000. In addition to the library service, Ryedale District Council operates from the centre on Fridays and there will be access to Helmsley town council services on Monday and Tuesday mornings.
- A new library and information centre for Kirkbymoorside is due to open in 2009. The project is the result of a partnership between North Yorkshire County Council, Ryedale District Council and the regional development agency Yorkshire Forward. The library and information centre will also act as a one-stop shop for public services, it will offer meeting rooms for hire, and will offer training opportunities.
- An exciting joint venture at Catterick Garrison to build a new leisure complex to support the expansion of the community as part of the long term development programme for Catterick Garrison that will result in Catterick becoming a 'super' garrison. This project has involved the North Yorkshire County Council Library Service working alongside the Ministry of Defence and Richmondshire District Council. The new state of the art library located in the leisure centre, due to open in August 2009, will have extended opening hours and additional public computers.
- Work is progressing on the £3.4 million state-of-the-art library in Harrogate. The new library will have a vast range of easily-accessed books on every subject under the sun, meeting rooms, an internet and computer suite, a cyber café and a one-stop-shop for council services. Just under half the funding for the library has come from a Big Lottery grant, while the remaining £1.9m has been invested by North Yorkshire County Council. The County Council is working closely with local partners and community and voluntary groups to make the new library into a "community hub" developing services such as health promotion, adult learning and volunteering opportunities. Whilst the work progresses a temporary library is operating at Copthall Bridge House.

The Youth Charter has been awarded to libraries in Scarborough, Pickering, Norton, Northallerton, Starbeck and Whitby. This Charter was developed by young people in North Yorkshire to show the standards they expect from local services and it gives them an active role in the design and evaluation of services they use.

3.0 Supporting the Community

The county's libraries have become central to their communities, important venues where people can meet and seek advice and enjoy stimulating activities as well as accessing essential resources through the web, archives and books. Family and local history services are offered as a community activity along with regular book groups, author visits and events.

Activities run by the libraries to support families include:

- Bookstart for children under five, aims to foster a library habit and love of books from the earliest age which children hopefully will maintain throughout their lives. Book Crawl encourages parents to bring their very young children to the local library where they can collect stickers on each visit. After four library visits they can exchange their stickers for a certificate – each certificate beautifully illustrated by well known children's illustrators.
- Baby Days are run regularly throughout the county. Parents and carers have the chance to meet experts and gather information about caring for babies. The day is supported by a number of organisations, including Surestart and the Fire Service. Topics covered include safety in the home, car seats for infants, dental care, real nappies and of course there is the chance to choose from the extensive collection of books for younger children.

Activities run by the libraries to support older people include:

- roadshows to help people over 50 get the best from their finances and keep the energy they use in check. Organised by the libraries with support from the voluntary, private and public sector organisations including the Citizens Advice Bureau, York Credit Union, Business Link Yorkshire, Age Concern, the Department of Work and Pensions.
- providing access free IT and computer skills training for older people at the 42 library-based UK online centres via the upgraded internet connection on to the NYnet network as part of Digital Unite's Silver Surfers' Day.

Activities in support of financial exclusion:

- people will be able to join and deposit funds with the North Yorkshire Credit Union in their local library. Pilots are being run in Selby and Scarborough libraries prior to roll out across the county.
- a partnership with Scarborough District Council is providing access to IT facilities and support for people wishing to make on-line benefit applications through the library public access computers.

Other activities include promotion of energy efficiency. The library service has nearly 200 "Smart Meters", which allow people to monitor their electricity consumption and work out ways of reducing their bills. The meters are available to borrow – just the same as library books, with a three week free "rental" period. As well as allowing people to cut down on their energy costs, the meters also help to lower power consumption, thus contributing to the efforts needed to reduce the County's carbon footprint.

4.0 Community Cohesion

Libraries across North Yorkshire are also working with public and voluntary sector partners to improve community cohesion by supporting new arrivals, people with special needs and by bringing the generations together.

To support new residents a variety of activities and events have been undertaken in 2009 including:

- The Ripon Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Forum organised open information events in Boroughbridge and Ripon
- Joining in with a national campaign in Poland to promote reading. The campaign

- Cala Polska Czysta Dzieciom, or All of Poland Reads to Kids - is aimed at encouraging parents to read with their children as a way of developing young people's social skills and educational attainment. The campaign is an annual event in Poland; North Yorkshire, which has a substantial Polish community following EU enlargement, is helping to spread the message
- A book collection in Polish was launched in 2008 to meet growing demand from Polish families who make up the largest number of migrant workers coming to North Yorkshire. Fourteen libraries in North Yorkshire now have Polish titles in stock, while others can order them upon request.

Four libraries held sessions about British Sign Language during Deaf Awareness Week in 2009 to promote the positive aspects of deafness and social inclusion and raises awareness of the huge range of local and national organisations that support Deaf people, their families and friends.

The County has been successful in receiving Big Lottery funding to participate in all three rounds of the programme, "Their Past Your Future" which is designed to support projects which reach across boundaries of race, religion and age to examine the threads that tie a society. In year one, the North Yorkshire County Record Office won a grant to support an innovative partnership project with the Young Offenders Institution in Northallerton. Young offenders worked with a nineteenth century police charge book, containing 'mug shots' to create an exhibition and learn about the history of crime and justice in North Yorkshire. In round two, the grant was used by Scarborough Library to fund "Conflict and Change: Scarborough's Fishing Heritage", in which teenagers and senior citizens worked together to explore the history of the town's fishing fleet during the Second World War. In the latest phase the grant will be used to fund a major community project exploring the past and future of Catterick Garrison - Europe's biggest Army base.

5.0 Scarborough Literature Festival

The library service also has a role in the supporting the local economy. Scarborough Literature Festival (www.scarboroughliteraturefestival.co.uk) has been running for three years starting in 2007. The Festival attracts visitors from overseas as well as across the region and the UK. It promotes literature and culture, support local talent and brings thousands of pounds into the economy of Scarborough and the surrounding area. The programme for "The Long Weekend" in 2009, included events featuring broadcasters Kate Adie and Libby Purves, a literary lunches and Scarborough library's 'Invasion of the Cyberman'.

6.0 Best Practice Recognition

Scarborough Intergenerational learning was cited as best practice by the Think Community discussion paper calling for increased learning opportunities that purposely bring different generations together, within and outside the family.

North Yorkshire Libraries cited as best practice by the Communities and Local Government Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in relation to supporting new communities and responding to migration trends.

7.0 Supporting Documents

NYCC, New Look, No Shush! A Strategy for our Library and Information Service
<http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2837&p=0>

8.0 Contacts

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