

Final Report

Research and Analysis to Explore the Service Effectiveness and Sustainability of Community Managed Libraries in England

May 2017

On behalf of:



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport

LIBRARIES
TASKFORCE

SERIO 

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1.0 Executive Summary

Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964¹ “...to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. In light of increased resourcing pressures, many local authorities have moved, or are now moving, to a model where they are working in partnership with communities to deliver this service.

As part of this shift towards the increased use of community libraries, DCMS and the Libraries Taskforce², a partnership body of sector stakeholders, want to ensure that local authorities have access to the most up-to-date and accurate evaluation of delivery options when they consider how they will provide their library services in the future to meet the needs of each community that they serve. Therefore, to further build the evidence base on community managed libraries, the Libraries Taskforce and DCMS commissioned [SERIO](#), an applied research unit at Plymouth University, to conduct an England-wide research project to understand more about how community managed libraries operate, and what lessons can be learnt and examples shared about their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The objectives of the research were to examine:

1. Whether, and how successfully, they are able to deliver the 7 Outcomes identified in ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021’³ (including as articulated in the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) Universal Offers⁴) and how / whether this has changed over time
2. Whether the service level / quality matches expectations prior to switching to a community managed library model
3. Any evidence around whether some community managed library models deliver against expectations more effectively than others
4. What could be done (at local and national level) to help them be more effective
5. Whether community managed libraries are sustainable over the longer-term in terms of both finances and other resources (e.g. staff / volunteers)

¹ Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/contents> (Section 7 - General duty of library authorities).

² Libraries Taskforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/libraries-taskforce>

³ Libraries Taskforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

⁴ Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) Universal Offers - <http://goscl.com/wp-content/uploads/UniversalOfferBooklet.pdf>

Methodology

The research consisted of a desk-based review to collect important contextual and comparative data that then informed the assessment against each of the research objectives. This included a literature review of documents, outlining expectations of community managed libraries such as service level agreements; and any research or evaluations conducted by (or for) local authorities in relation to the effectiveness and sustainability of community managed libraries.

An online baseline survey was conducted with community library service managers, staff and volunteers across the 9 regions of England, to provide a broader understanding of the delivery models and effectiveness of community managed libraries. This was followed by the development of nine detailed case studies, one for each of these regions, to inform the research objectives. Finally, a financial sustainability review, library user survey and interviews with local authority stakeholders from across the 9 regions were conducted to assess library effectiveness and financial and resource sustainability.

The research was limited to the number and typology of community managed libraries that responded to the initial online survey, and subsequently provided consent to be contacted for further investigation. Therefore, the information collected cannot be considered a representative sample of the community library sector as a whole. However, additional analysis was conducted following consultation with DCMS and Libraries Taskforce (with input from Local Government Association) to ensure, as far as possible, a representative sample of community library typology, age, demographic profile and geographic location across the 9 regions in England.

Models examined

The research used 3 overarching types of community library model, as described in the Libraries Taskforce's "Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit"⁵, as the basis for classifying community managed libraries for analysis and reporting.

These three models are:

1. **Independent libraries (ILs)** - run fully independently of the local authority library service.
2. **Community managed libraries (CMLs)** - community led and largely community delivered, rarely with paid staff, but often with professional support and some form of ongoing local authority support.
3. **Community supported libraries (CSLs)** - council-led and funded, usually with paid professional staff, but given significant support by volunteers.

This typology is broadly illustrative of the different types of community library models

⁵ Libraries Taskforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit#community-library-models-1>

in existence but, in practice, there is great variation in the operational structures chosen and the services offered. In addition, there are situations where more than one model is used within one council area, recognising that even within one area, 'one size does not fit all'.⁶

For the purposes of this research, the acronym CL will be used inclusively to refer to all three recognised types of community library. The acronyms ILs, CMLs and CSLs will be used throughout the report to refer to the 3 specific model types of independent libraries, community managed libraries and community supported libraries respectively.

Research findings

Analysis of the information collected during the primary research and desk-based review identified 6 key themes regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of community managed libraries. They were:

Communication and recognition

The desk based review consistently pointed towards the **requirement for greater communication, understanding, and strengthening of links between local authorities and CLs**. This was validated in the primary research, particularly by CMLs who cited **varying levels of communication** with local authorities, in addition to a perceived **lack of official recognition** for the role that CMLs play, as **barriers to their future development and sustainability**. These barriers were highlighted by CMLs as a wish for greater recognition of their services by their local authority library service and for their inclusion within national statistics. Also of note was the desire by CMLs to change the nature of the relationship with local authorities to that of both groups working on a more mutually beneficial basis, supporting each other in the delivery of local library services.

Recommendation

It is recommended that ongoing engagement between local authorities and CLs is encouraged. This could be supported by the increased promotion of existing support materials, such as the 'Stronger co-ordination and partnership working' section of 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'¹³, by the Local Government Association (LGA) to its members, and by existing CL peer networks, i.e. 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹.

⁶ Locality (2013) - [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Community libraries research 2013 summary report.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Community%20libraries%20research%202013%20summary%20report.pdf)

CLs are also treated differently by local authorities **across England**, with some CLs being part of the statutory service and other CLs not being aware if they are part of the statutory service or not. **Increased clarity of communications at a local level between CLs and local authorities could be supported by additional national guidance** for local authorities on when to view CLs as potentially providing a statutory service. It **could also provide example service level agreements (SLA's) or memorandum of understanding (MoU's) for local authorities to use** in setting out clear expectations for delivery by existing and new CLs. This guidance should be provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and consideration should be given about whether it could take a similar format as that produced by the Welsh Government in their publication "Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales"⁷

Recommendation

It is recommended that additional national guidance for local authorities is provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This guidance should set out when a CL should, or should not, be viewed as potentially providing a statutory service and also provide examples of SLA's and/or MoU's templates that can be used by local authorities to set out expectations for CL delivery of services. This guidance could take the form as that produced by the Welsh Government in their publication "Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales"⁷

Shared learning

CLs cited their wish to see **increased cohesion and learning developed through a nationwide peer support group** that, separate to engagement with local authorities, aimed to share learning and good practice across specific issues that CLs face; a view that was echoed by stakeholders interviewed. The shared learning and knowledge created by the networks would encourage self-ownership by CLs of the challenges within the sector, and provide a route for local authorities to engage with CLs in a different manner. Peer networking could therefore take a more prominent role in catalysing development and enhancing the communication process between CLs, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

⁷ GOV.WALES (2017) [online] <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150522community-managed-libraries-en.pdf>

Recommendation

It is recommended that existing networking arrangements, such as the Community Knowledge Hub⁸ and 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹, are supported, developed and promoted for further dissemination by the Taskforce and its members (particularly the LGA) to relevant stakeholders, local authorities and CLs.

Sustainability

In terms of the effectiveness of service delivery, despite areas of commonality across the CSL and CML models, there is a great deal of variability in how these services are provided. This variability is the result of a range of localised internal and external factors, and therefore it is reasonable to argue that **the CL sector cannot be fully understood by segregating library types into operational model types alone.**

The **likelihood of success** for sustainably financed and resourced community libraries **is dependent on a broad set of internal** factors, such as drive, determination, volunteer availability and expertise, **and external factors**, such as the impact of local authority policy and resource availability.

Despite these factors, the majority of CLs indicated that they intend to grow the number and scale of their enhanced or income generating services in the future, highlighting a **desire to increase revenue incomes and support their sustainable growth into the future.** However, these same libraries reported that their main revenue streams will still be derived from the delivery of core services, indicating **limitations to their ambitions to grow in the short-term whilst they remain reliant on some form of centralised local authority funding or support.** Therefore, the **current rates of sustainable growth in the research should be considered fragile.**

In particular, despite the financial sustainability analysis reporting generally positive growth, **current library models demonstrate a high dependency on volunteer performance and availability, and a high level of sensitivity to additional financial burden**, such as increasing overhead costs.

⁸ Community Knowledge Hub - <http://libraries.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/content/community-knowledge-hub>

⁹ 'Community Peer Library Network' - <http://www.thepowertochange.org.uk/support-and-resources/peer-networking/>

The dependency on volunteers is particularly important, with CLs **citing volunteer availability and capability as a key barrier**. Volunteers represent a critical resource for revenue generation and future development, however CLs raised concerns regarding the gap in volunteer availability becoming greater as the number of older volunteers providing their time either reduced or ceased. Some CLs have **tackled this barrier** by developing interesting and engaging services that **attract and encourage a different age range of volunteers** to participate, and which can be provided without the need for additional training above that of a basic nature.

Recommendation

It is recommended that additional information and support on how to increase volunteer recruitment and improve succession planning and retention is provided by local authorities and (such as the Taskforce and peer support networks) to CLs. This could include increasing connections with national partners such as the National Citizen Service (NCS), or exploring corporate volunteering opportunities. Learning and good practice developed through this support, and areas of further research into how to attract and retain volunteers of all ages with the right skills, (as outlined in point 1 of section 13.5.2) should be incorporated into the 'Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit'⁵ and receive additional promotion by CL peer networks, such as the 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹

Effectiveness

All **libraries reported that they felt they were delivering efficient and effective services for the majority of those services that they offer**, a view that was verified by both the user survey and stakeholder interviews. **Stakeholders** interviewed as part of the research, which consisted of local authority representatives responsible for library services, **were also generally positive** about how they viewed CLs and their ability to deliver library services. When asked if they felt CLs were effective in delivering the 7 Outcomes, as outlined by 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'³, **they felt that CLs were 'quite' or 'very effective' in delivering four of the seven Outcomes**. Those Outcomes where stakeholders felt CLs were currently less effective were **'healthier and happier lives', 'greater prosperity' and 'helping everyone achieve their full potential'**.

The **majority of stakeholders indicated that they felt that CLs had met or exceeded expectations for specific outputs** including financial savings; increased opening hours, visitor counts and book issues, maintaining quality levels and increasing social capital in the local area. There were also **areas where**

stakeholders reported that they felt that CLs were better placed than they were to deliver services that engaged and tailored services to local communities. However, a small minority of stakeholders reported that, in some cases, their **expectations were set low to begin with**, raising the question as to whether the performance of CLs is assessed by stakeholders on an equal basis with local authority led libraries.

Following on from this, stakeholders indicated that **size, proximity to local authority led libraries, a lack of ongoing local authority support and a limited range of services on offer from CLs could be limiting factors in their future sustainability**, factors that correlated with the views voiced by community libraries. However, some stakeholders confirmed that their existing support would probably continue for the foreseeable future; and all stakeholders reported that they were 'very comfortable' with the idea of income generation or 'enterprising' activities undertaken within a library context, indicating that developing this area of income generation for CLs is broadly supported.

Support

CLs identified limited sources of funding and building restrictions as key barriers. Tackling these barriers is challenging given that solutions are limited by external factors, such as the availability of localised funding and the physical building constraints that libraries operate within. **Income generation activities are critical to CLs long-term sustainability**, allied with ongoing support from local authorities, for example, through contributions to core funding (especially in the early years), free/discounted access to library management systems and IT, and reduced business rates and preferential lease rates. Both CLs and local authorities both recognise there is a need for more funding opportunities to be made available for CLs; ranging from minor support to more substantial grant funding.

Recommendation

It is recommended that further information and support is provided to CLs to identify, prepare and apply for local and national grant funding sources. This information and support could be provided through 'Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit'⁵, the 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹ or by local authorities assisting CLs by providing access to information and training, ensuring that CLs are able to benefit from any funding streams that become available.

A regular theme identified by CLs is the **value of ongoing ad-hoc or targeted support from local authorities** that does not necessarily relate to direct funding, for

example, informal advice, support with accessing local volunteer networks, and combined training sessions. This **support has enabled CLs** a window of opportunity **to consolidate their volunteer base, ensure effective service delivery** and, in particular in the case of CMLs, **develop new enhanced or income generating services** that have contributed to their long-term sustainability.

Recommendation

Local authorities should be encouraged to provide on-going 'non-financial' and 'provision of expertise' support to CLs, such as informal advice, or free/discounted access to library management systems and IT, combined training sessions or preferential lease rates. This continuing support is particularly valuable to CLs in the short to medium term period (Years 1 to 3) of consolidation required to ensure their sustainable development.

Areas for further research

Following on from the themes identified by the research, a number of additional areas have been identified that would warrant further investigation – either because insufficient information was available at this stage, or because specific areas of enquiry fell outside the scope of this piece of work.

1. First, the availability and capability of volunteers within the community library sector was consistently identified as a key factor for the future sustainability of community libraries. Therefore, going beyond the recommendation regarding increasing volunteer recruitment and succession planning, **further research is required to fully understand the key drivers and barriers in attracting, training, developing and retaining volunteers.** The learning from this further research should then be applied to the 'Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit'⁵
2. Secondly, due to the limited number of IL respondents, **additional investigation into ILs is required to fully understand their operational models and methods of revenue generation.** Initial insights indicated that the level of revenue and breadth of services ILs offer far exceeds that of both CSLs and CMLs. Therefore, to provide a holistic view of the CL sector, it is recommended that areas of IL good practice are examined and disseminated to CSLs, CMLs and local authority led libraries, through updates to the 'Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit'⁵ and through the 'Community Peer Library Network'⁷
3. Finally, the desk based review of available information regarding community libraries within existing literature, specifically concerning their effectiveness and sustainability, was found to be limited. However, the review did not conduct an exhaustive search of all available evidence, but rather captured key findings that summarised current levels of understanding. Therefore, **there would be benefit in conducting a wider review of available evidence to inform future research,** based on the findings in this report.

2.0 Context and Background

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) oversees policy on public libraries and is responsible for the promotion and superintendence of the public library sector in Englandⁱ. It is supported by the Libraries Taskforce², a partnership body of sector stakeholders, which is jointly sponsored by DCMS and the Local Government Association (LGA). Their role is to provide leadership to, and help to reinvigorate, the public library sector, and to enable the delivery of the recommendations from the Independent Library Report for England¹⁰. The Libraries Taskforce remit covers public libraries in England only, however it liaises with the Devolved Administrations to share information and learning.

Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964¹ “...to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”. Many local authorities are now working in partnership with communities to deliver this service. This may be through volunteers working alongside paid staff to run statutory services or communities taking on responsibility for delivering services. The latter may be accompanied by the library moving out of the statutory service where a needs assessment indicates the ability to withdraw the statutory council service. This move to increased community involvement is also happening in other public services, including museums, post offices, leisure centres, community halls and pubs.

DCMS and the Libraries Taskforce¹⁰, want to ensure that local authorities have access to the most up-to-date and accurate evaluation of delivery options when they consider how they will provide their library services in the future to meet the needs of each community that they serve. To further build the evidence base on community managed libraries, the Libraries Taskforce and DCMS commissioned [SERIO](#), an applied research unit at Plymouth University, to conduct an England-wide research project to understand more about how community managed libraries operate, and what lessons or examples can be learnt and shared about their effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

To assess how far community managed libraries successfully and sustainably support the delivery of the statutory duty to deliver a ‘comprehensive and efficient library service’, the research project required evidence to understand how effective community managed libraries are in terms of service delivery compared to other library delivery models, including:

¹⁰Independent Library Report for England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-library-report-for-england>

1. Whether, and how successfully, they are able to deliver the 7 Outcomes identified in 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'³ (including as articulated in the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) Universal Offers⁴) and how / whether this has changed over time.
2. Whether the service level / quality matches expectations prior to switching to a community managed library model.
3. Any evidence around whether some community managed library models deliver against expectations more effectively than others.
4. What could be done (at local and national level) to help them be more effective.
5. Whether community managed libraries are sustainable over the longer-term in terms of both finances and other resources (e.g. staff / volunteers), including:
 - a. Whether they are sustainable at all
 - b. Whether they are more or less sustainable than other library delivery models
 - c. Whether some community managed library models appear to be more sustainable than others
 - d. What could be done to maximise the likelihood of long-term sustainability
 - e. How efficient community managed libraries appear to be compared to other delivery models (including any value for money assessments readily available), in particular how the efficiencies delivered by community managed models compare to what stakeholders expected when switching to this model of library provision.

3.0 Summary of research methods

To address these research themes, the following methodology was developed to offer robust conclusions on the effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency of community managed libraries.

3.1 Desk based review

A desk-based review was undertaken to collect important contextual and comparative data which informed the assessment against each of the research objectives. This included a literature review of documents, outlining expectations of community managed libraries such as service level agreements; and any research or evaluations conducted by (or for) local authorities about the effectiveness and sustainability of community managed libraries. A search strategyⁱⁱ was developed that applied the appropriate key words to academic databases and grey literature. The purpose of the review was not to conduct an exhaustive search of all available evidence, but rather to capture the key findings that summarise current levels of understanding.

3.2 Online Baseline Survey

An online baseline survey with community library service managers, staff and volunteers across England was conducted to provide a broader understanding of the delivery models and effectiveness of community managed libraries. This approach represented the most efficient and effective method to collect the range of data required from the different research sample populations across the 9 regions of England. Responses about issues such as effectiveness, sustainability and efficiency were collected through this online survey, providing a greater understanding of these within community managed libraries in England and enabling a comparison between the range of different community managed library models currently operating.

3.3 Case studies

Nine detailed case studies, one for each of the regions of England, were produced. Each case study was selected based upon providing the greatest range of typological, geographical, demographic and community library model and age type to inform the research objectives. Developing the case studies involved telephone and in-person interviews with library service managers, staff, volunteers, and local authority stakeholders (see section 3.6). Semi-structured interviews were used to enable an in-depth exploration of topics covered in the baseline survey as well as open discussion about the issues especially pertinent to each respondent, which subsequently provided the data required to meet the research objectives.

3.4 Users Survey

A total of 410 postal surveys were distributed to the 9 case study libraries. The libraries subsequently circulated the surveys amongst their users. The survey explored users' views and experiences of the library to provide insight into what types of services are being used, how satisfied people are with those services, and what, if anything, could be done to improve those services. As an incentive, respondents were offered the chance to win one of nine £10 Amazon vouchers and one of two £25 iTunes vouchers.

3.5 Financial sustainability analysis

Community libraries responding to the online baseline survey were asked to provide basic income and expenditure data for their libraries for the latest full financial year. CLs were also asked for consent to be contacted regarding collecting more detailed financial information. A small sample of the CLs who provided consent were asked to provide additional financial information for (up to) the previous three years, or from the first full financial year of trading, to assess their financial sustainability over the longer-term. Financial sustainability was assessed by comparing performance between CL models against a set of financial indicators.

3.6 Stakeholder interviews

Ten local authority stakeholders from each of the 9 regions in England were identified and invited to take part in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour to explore the following key themes:

- The Library service history and provision of statutory services in the region; including if and how the local authority have been involved with community managed libraries;
- Where regional library services have adapted to include community managed libraries, what expectations were regarding their delivery; and perceptions of how efficiently community managed libraries perform;
- Opinions on the benefits or drawbacks of community managed libraries compared to pre-community managed models, particularly highlighting where community managed models have exceeded or under-performed against expectations; and
- Views on the future direction and sustainability of library services, in the context of both local authority and community managed library models

4.0 Desk Review of the sustainability and effectiveness of community managed libraries

The desk review of the sustainability and effectiveness of community managed libraries revealed the following findings:

4.1 *The Transition*

Public libraries within England have connected communities and individuals over the last 150 years or so, providing a safe, neutral space for members of the community to use.

Involving the community in supporting and delivering library services is not a new concept, and groups such as ‘Friends of ...’ have helped to raise funds and support the continued existence of libraries for many years.¹¹ In addition, the use of community volunteers has formed part of local library provision for decades¹² and, from the 1950s up until the 1980s, community managed libraries in the form of networks of local volunteers delivered much of rural Britain’s public library service.¹³

However, with the recent resource challenges public sector organisations across England have faced, there is an increasing focus on the role communities can play in shaping and delivering their local library service.² Managing resources effectively and in a sustainable manner is fundamental and, if properly supported, community managed libraries can contribute to the adaptability and innovation required to deliver an efficient library service.¹⁴

It has been suggested that community involvement is not a ‘quick fix’ for strengthening sustainability within library services. Communities and local authorities need time and resources to investigate the transition to new arrangements with increased community involvement.¹⁵ The challenge is not simply to transfer libraries to community management to ensure local authority efficiencies, but to work with communities in a strategic manner that will create shared benefits for the local community, local government and local users¹⁶.

¹¹ Locality. (2012). Community Libraries- Learning from experience: guiding principles for local authorities

¹² Locality. (2013). Community libraries- Learning from experience: Summary briefing for local authorities

¹³ Williams, 2012 in Cavanagh, M. (2014). Are Community Managed Libraries Effective? Summary Report

¹⁴ DCMS. (2016). Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit#community-library-models-1>.

¹⁵ 15 Locality (2012)

¹⁶ MLA. (2011). Community managed libraries

4.2 Library Models

There are various forms of community library in existence. Some local authorities pay community groups or charities to deliver statutory services; whilst other communities continue to deliver or develop their own services where local authority funding is being withdrawn.⁷ As described in the Libraries Taskforce's "Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit",⁵ there are 3 overarching types of community library model:

1. **Independent libraries** - run fully independently of the local authority library service.
2. **Community managed libraries** - community led and largely community delivered, rarely with paid staff, but often with professional support and some form of ongoing local authority support.
3. **Community supported libraries** - council-led and funded, usually with paid professional staff, but given significant support by volunteers.

This typology is broadly illustrative of the different types of community library models in existence, but in practice, there is great variation in the operational structures chosen and the services offered. In addition, there are situations where more than one model is used within one local authority area, accepting that even within one area, 'one size does not fit all'.¹⁷

For the purposes of this research, **the acronym CL will be used inclusively to refer to all three recognised types of community library.** The acronyms **ILs, CMLs and CSLs** will be used throughout the report to **refer to** the 3 specific model types of **independent libraries, community managed libraries and community supported libraries** respectively.

A 2016 report noted that the pace of CL growth in England is relatively rapid, with the number of CLs having increased by a fifth since 2015, from 250 to 300.¹⁸

4.3 Sustainability

Libraries are operating in a changing landscape characterised by declining public funding and increased demand for digital capabilities. Leadership and a clearly articulated 'theory of change' is required to improve the overall sustainability and resilience in future library services.¹⁹ In the face of this challenging environment, CLs

¹⁷ Locality (2013)

¹⁸ Community Business Market (2016)

¹⁹ Locality. (2014). Enabling Enterprise in Libraries

are adopting more dynamic strategies to remain sustainable.²⁰ For example they are increasingly diversifying their services and expanding their income streams, providing secondary activities alongside their core work such as cafés or community hub facilities.

In Locality's review of current and potential library enterprise activities, five key areas of opportunity for income generation were identified¹⁷:

- non-library service public contracts
- private sector service contracts
- direct trading through the sale of complementary products
- charges for services, and
- new/ emergent ICT services.

A pilot programme explored the potential of various income-generating activities for libraries, establishing a learning base to build upon.²¹ The programme report detailed several important themes to be taken into account if income generation within public libraries was to be increased. Among them was the need for significant organisational transformation to occur and for staff attitudes to embrace service transformation. Critical elements included a need for:

- Staff to buy into the vision, mission and values of the service;
- Staff to be duly recognised for their efforts; and
- For an environment to be fostered that encourages participation and innovation.

Other themes included the need for libraries to consider the scope, scale and form of their service offerings, for example engaging in multi-authority partnerships to achieve greater financial returns; and considering the sale of specialist resources or assets.

However, despite these efforts, in the past 5 years the total income raised from library services has remained relatively unchanged, at around 8% of total expenditure.²²

For existing CLs, the ownership of assets was not originally a part of transfer agreements, but in relation to the development of sustainable CLs, it is beginning to play an important role.²³ Transferring library buildings into the ownership of legally

²⁰ Hull et al (2016)

²¹ Locality (2015)

²² CIPFA (2014) as cited in Locality (2015)

²³ MLA (2011)

constituted community groups can open up a range of possibilities that can result in improvements to the layout and fabric of buildings. A community asset transfer can be an essential factor in increasing the prospects for future financial sustainability, with a rising number of local authorities recognising that this can form an important part of their strategic asset management.²⁴ However, transferring library buildings into community ownership is not always viable, and each individual case needs consideration on its own merits. Nevertheless, in recent years, the majority of local authorities in England have started to consider the process of transferring assets to communities.²⁵

4.4 Effectiveness

There are no national performance standards or frameworks extant in the English public library sector that local authorities can assess CLs against to evidence whether they are providing effective services. Previous frameworks such as 'Public Library Standards'²⁶ and 'Public Library Impact Measures'²⁷ were removed in 2008.

Cavanagh²⁸ also noted that there was little guidance available to enable robust evaluation of CL services. Therefore, in the absence of clear criteria for assessing library effectiveness, Cavanagh invited two groups of library staff to complete an online survey, reporting on the services their library provided and the degree of importance they placed on certain aspects of library provision. He compared the responses of CL leader volunteers ('volunteers', n=36) with those from leading traditional libraries ('librarians', n=34). Due to the small sample size of the Cavanagh research, the findings associated with the work should be considered indicative rather than representative.

Although noting that there was no baseline to compare service provision prior to the CLs becoming volunteer-managed, Cavanagh observed that CLs offered a narrowed yet diversified service when compared to traditional libraries. They were less likely to be open in the evening, provide newspapers or magazines, or offer e-books; but were more likely to offer unique services such as a café or film nights. Librarians in traditional libraries tended to report that they felt CLs would do less well compared to when the library was professionally staffed; whilst volunteers tended to report that their CL was performing better than when the library was professionally staffed.

²⁴ Locality (2013)

²⁵ Locality (2012)

²⁶ DCMS (2007)

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20081007154433/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/3662.aspx

²⁷ Cipfastats.net. (2017)

²⁸ Cavanagh (2014)

Regarding the importance of training, librarians in traditional libraries were found to perceive various areas of training as essential, such as *Equality and Diversity*, *Data Protection*, *Freedom of Information*, and *Customer Care*, whereas volunteers were less likely to perceive training as important. Further to this, both volunteers and librarians reported undertaking less training than that perceived as being needed. For example, 100% of librarians and 46% of volunteers perceived that training in *Customer Care* was essential, but only 43% of librarians and 29% of volunteers reported that they had received such training.

There were also differences of opinion observed between volunteers and librarians concerning the relative importance they placed on 30 different aspects of library services. While *library usage* and the *quality of staff/ volunteers* were ranked in the librarians' top 5 essential criteria, volunteers ranked these criteria 17th and 14th respectively. Conversely, volunteers ranked *staff/ volunteer morale* as the most essential criteria, whereas librarians ranked it much lower. There were some similarities in rankings between the groups, for example *customer satisfaction* and *services suited to customer's needs* were ranked highly by both volunteers and librarians; whilst *parking provision* and *staff/ volunteer demographics reflecting the communities served* were both ranked relatively unimportant by both groups. There was also variation in the level of support that volunteers reported they were receiving from their local authority. While some reported that local authorities provided them with professional assistance whenever they needed it, others perceived that their CL was at risk of closure if footfall to the library did not increase.

Cavanagh noted that there appears to be widespread variation across the library network regarding the range of services and training provided, and the extent of local authority support. He suggested that the evidence indicates there is currently a '*fragmented and inconsistent network of volunteer delivered libraries*' and a national library standards framework is needed to reduce service variability between and within local authorities.

To reduce service variability and support heads of library services and communities looking to establish community managed libraries, the Libraries Taskforce published the "Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit".⁵ It provides guidance on establishing a community managed library, including how to engage in effective partnerships with local authorities and other stakeholders and ensure a high-quality service is provided to local people. First launched in March 2016, the toolkit is a live document which is regularly iterated and improved based on feedback.

4.5 Concluding Points

From the literature search summarised in the previous section, it was evident that there is a reasonable body of literature available regarding the effective delivery of public library services. However, specific literature that addresses and investigates community run library services is relatively sparse. Therefore, this report looks to contribute to the literature specifically looking at the effectiveness and sustainability of community library models. However, **as the review did not conduct an exhaustive search of all available evidence, there would be benefit in conducting a wider review of available evidence to inform future research, based on the findings in this report.**

5.0 Online baseline survey of community library models in England

The following section provides the findings from the online baseline survey sent to all community libraries:

5.1 Library Models

The research used 3 overarching types of community library model, as described in the Libraries Taskforce's "Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit"²⁹, and earlier in section 4.2, as the basis for classifying community managed libraries for analysis and reporting. This **typology is broadly illustrative** of the different types of community library models in existence **but, in practice, there is great variation in the operational structures** chosen and the services offered.

5.2 Library Demographics

In total, **61 libraries responded** to the online survey within the three-week timeframe allocated. This reflects a **13.5% response rate, of the 442 libraries** that were invited to take part.

[Please note that due to variability in the number of responses to each question within the survey, percentages reported will vary due to differing bases and/or non-responses. Response numbers will be provided against each statistic reported.]

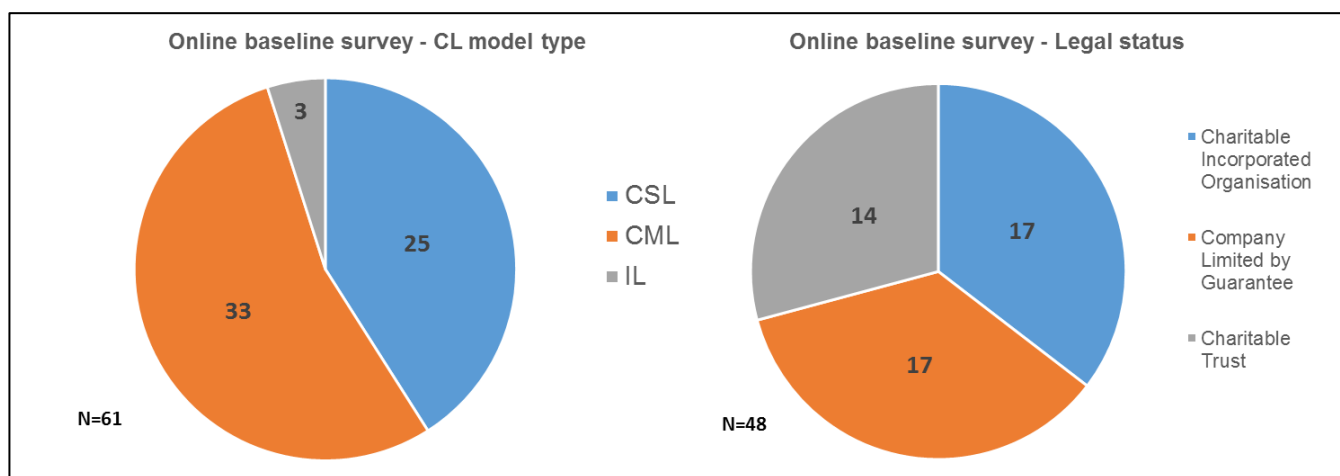
CLs for the survey sample were identified through consultation with the Libraries Taskforce and primary desk based research. Due to non-responses, the number of CLs in the East, North East and North West regions were under-represented when compared to the other six regions. However, there was an even response across all of the 9 regions in terms of typology, deprivation levels and demographics. Given

²⁹ Libraries Taskforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit#community-library-models-1>

this, **the survey cannot be considered as representative of the CL sector as a whole**, but should be **considered indicative of CL model and operational type** across England.

Responding libraries were **located across 30 local authority areas** and were comprised of a diverse range of organisational legal statuses and community library models. Chart 1 provides information regarding legal status and CL model reported from the online survey respondents.

Chart 1 - Online survey respondents – CL model type and legal status



Due to the low base number of ILs, any statistical comparisons drawn between the models will be limited to CSLs and CMLs.

More than half of all the libraries surveyed (**60%**, 36 libraries) reported that they were part of their council's statutory library service network. Other libraries were either not part of the network (**20%**, 12 libraries) or they were unsure (**20%**, 12 libraries).

Of the 3 models CSLs are, unsurprisingly, most likely to report being part of their council's statutory library service network; however only around three-quarters of CSLs indicated they are members (**72%**, 18 libraries). The remaining **28%** (7 libraries) were unsure, raising questions over the clarity of communication between the library and their local authority regarding the provision of statutory services.

Over half of CMLs (**56%**, 18 libraries) reported that they were part of their council statutory library network; **15%** (5 libraries) were unsure and **27%** (9 libraries) reported that they were not. As anticipated, all 3 ILs responded that they were not part of the statutory library service network.

5.3 Delivering Library Services

5.3.1 Core Library Services

The online baseline survey listed 9 core services that CLs may be expected to deliver as part of the statutory network membership (a list of core services can be found in Annex 1). Of the libraries who were part of their council's statutory library network, 86% (16 CSLs and 14 CMLs) reported that some of their services are provided as a result of their statutory network membership; the most commonly offered services included:³⁰

- Book loans/ reservations (**63%**, 8 CSLs and 11 CMLs);
- Wi-Fi (**40%**, 4 CSLs and 8 CMLs);
- Inter-library loans (**30%**, 3 CSLs and 6 CMLs);
- Access to computers (**26%**, 3 CSLs and 5 CMLs).

Responses also indicated a greater appetite to engage further with their local authority with regards to providing statutory services:

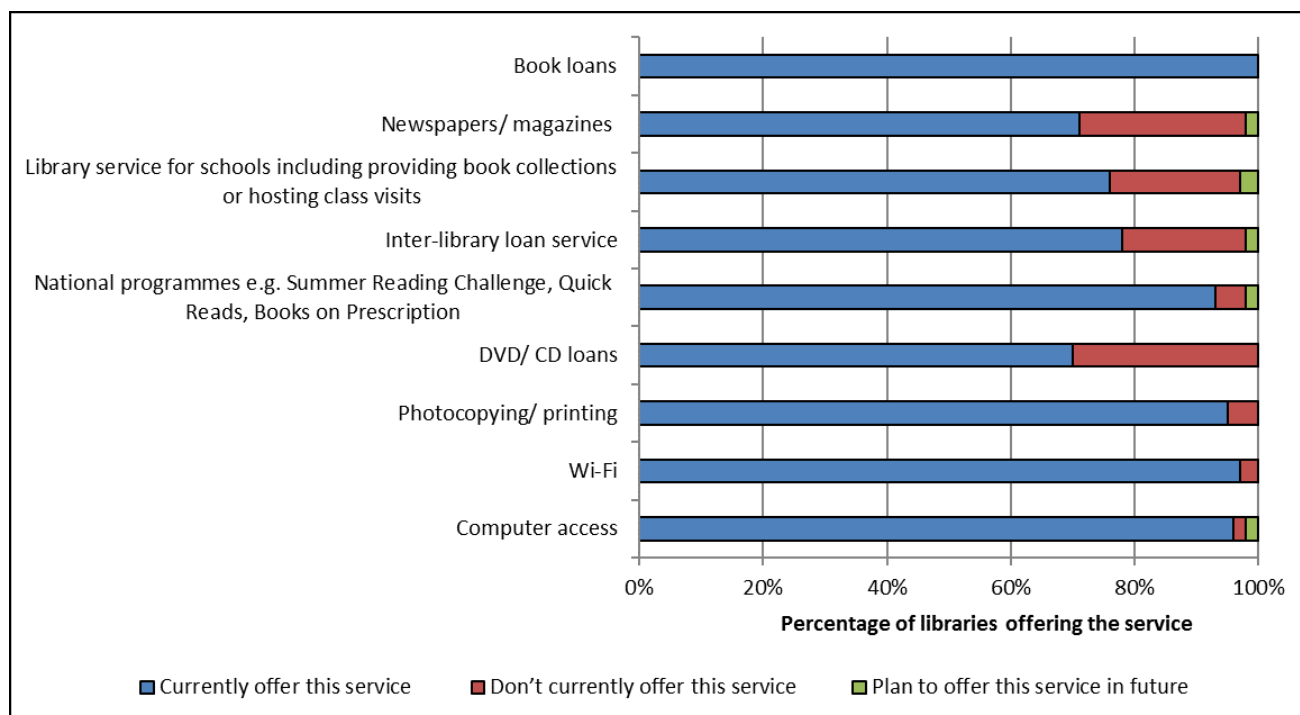
“Even accepting our local authority’s terrible financial situation, we would like to have a closer relationship with the statutory library service, for example marketing our activity programme through the local authority”

However, across all CL models, the majority of respondents reported that they offer a range of core library services, whether they are part of the statutory service network or not. **CLs on average provide at least 7 of the 9 core library services** listed. As Chart 2 shows, the most common services provided by both CMLs and CSLs included: book loans; photocopying/ printing; computer access and Wi-Fi provision.

Of those who offer computer access, just under two thirds (**60%**, 15 CSLs, 9 CMLs, and 1 IL) note that they provide this service for free. Around a third (**31%**, 7 CSLs, 10 CMLs, and 1 IL) said that computer access is free for a set period (e.g. 1 hour) or for certain people (e.g. children or library members), and then is subsequently chargeable. The remaining **9%** (2 CSLs, 2 CMLs and 1 IL) said that all their computer access is chargeable.

³⁰ Not all libraries provided a full list of services they provide as a result of their statutory library network membership

Chart 2 - Core services provided by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 61 (with exception of book loans n=60; newspapers/ magazines n=60; library service for schools n=58; inter-library loan service n=59; DVD/ CD loans n=59; Wi-Fi n=60)

A large majority of community libraries reported that they receive financial and/or in-kind support from their local authority to deliver the core services they provide, including:

- Inter-library loan service (**95%**, 19 CSLs and 20 CMLs)
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription (**90%**, 21 CSLs and 26 CMLs)
- Book loans (**89%**, 24 CSLs and 26 CMLs)
- Computer access (**80%**, 20 CSLs and 24 CMLs)
- DVD/CD loans (**74%**, 14 CSLs and 15 CMLs)
- Wi-Fi (**72%**, 17 CSLs and 22 CMLs)

Libraries were less likely to report that they received local authority support to provide newspapers/ magazines (**30%**, 9 CSLs and 3 CMLs), and library service for schools (**26%**, 6 CSLs and 3 CMLs).

5.3.2 Enhanced Library Services

The online baseline survey highlighted variation in the types of enhanced library services CLs offer (a list of enhanced services can be found in Annex 1). From a list of 16 potential enhanced services, CLs reported providing between zero and twelve

enhanced services (mean= 6).

As shown in Chart 3, a large proportion of libraries reported offering community events and parent and baby groups **87%** (19 CSLs, 30 CMLs and 3 ILs) and **85%** (20 CSLs, 26 CMLs and 3 ILs) respectively. Similarly, around two thirds of libraries reported that they offer:

- Reading groups (**64%**, 15 CSLs, 21 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Local history archive (**64%**, 16 CSLs, 20 CMLs and 1 IL)
- e-book loans (**63%**, 18 CSLs and 18 CMLs)

This is supported by comments provided by CLs within the survey:

“We have an events programme including lectures, classes, activities for small children, and wellbeing sessions for older people”

“There are book sales, plant sales, local events information, health information, education information, and displays of local authority consultation documents”

Around half the libraries surveyed reported that they offer:

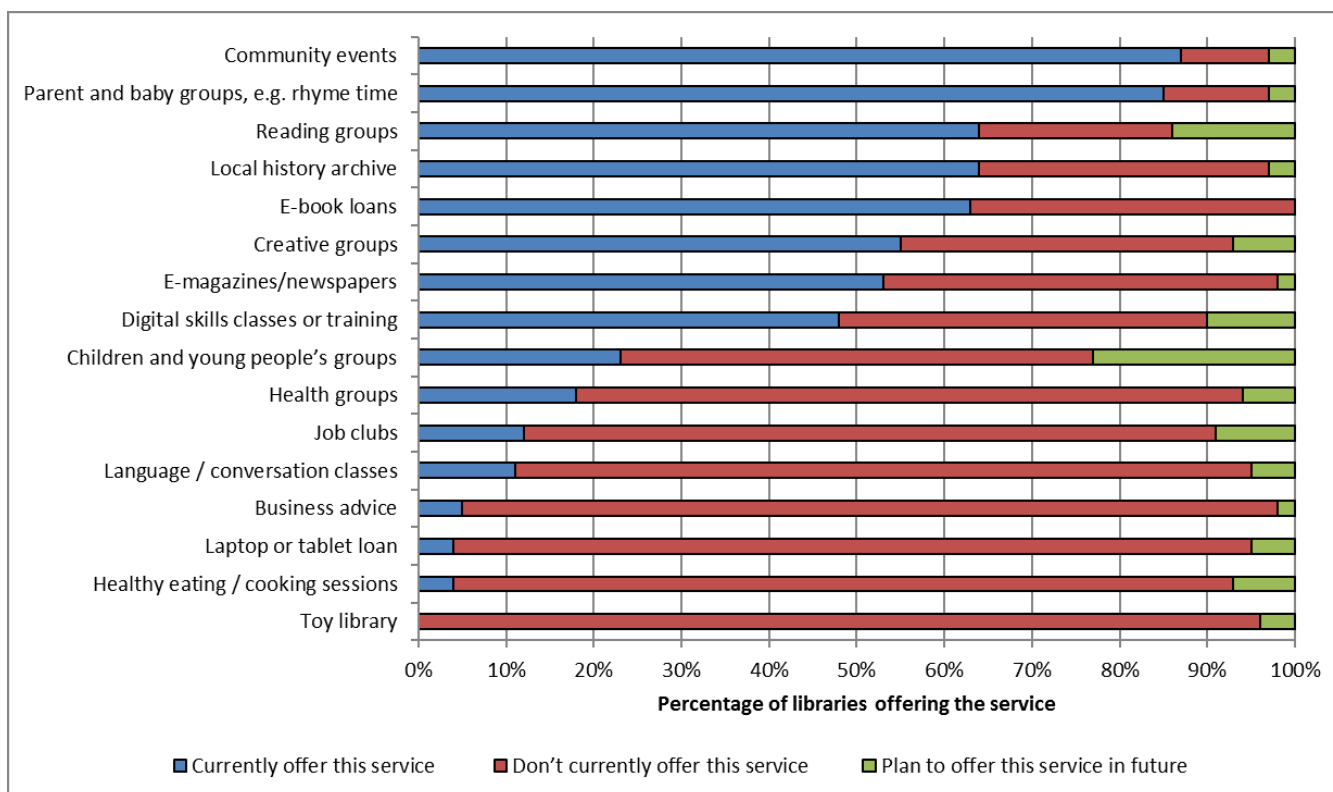
- Creative groups (**55%**, 10 CSLs, 19 CMLs and 3 ILs);
- e-magazines (**53%**, 15 CSLs and 13 CMLs); and
- Digital skills classes or training (**48%**, 8 CSLs, 18 CMLs and 2 ILs)

Less than a quarter of libraries currently offer children and young people's groups, or health groups (**23%**, 7 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 2 ILs; and **18%**, 2 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 2 ILs respectively).

Groups for children and young people was the service that libraries were most likely to report as one they planned to offer in the future (**23%**, 3 CSLs and 10 CMLs). With regards to the services that libraries were least likely to report offering or planning to offer, no libraries said that they offer a toy library and only 2 libraries (1 CSL and 1 CML) indicated that they plan to offer one in the future.

Similarly, business advice, laptop or tablet loan, and healthy eating/ cooking sessions were currently on offer by only **5%** (1 CSL, 1 CML and 1 IL), **4%** (1 CSL and 1 CML) and **4%** (1 CSL and 1 IL) of libraries respectively; with only 1, 3 and 4 libraries indicating that they plan to offer these services in future.

Chart 3 - Enhanced services provided by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 60 (except reading groups n=59; digital skills classes or training n=58; creative groups n=58; parent and baby groups n=58; local history archive n=58; healthy eating/ cooking sessions n=57; job clubs n=57; e-book loans n=57; laptop or tablet loan n=56; business advice n=56; children and young people's groups n=56; language/ conversation classes n=56; health groups n=55; toy library n=54; e-magazines/ newspapers n=53)

Overall, CLs reported receiving less support from their local authority to deliver enhanced services, when compared to core services. For example, the majority of libraries reported that they do not receive any form of financial or in-kind support from their local authority to deliver:

- Creative groups (**97%**, 8 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Community events (**94%**, 17 CSLs, 25 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Children and young people's groups (**92%**, 6 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Parent and baby groups (**89%**, 15 CSLs, 22 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Digital skills classes (**80%**, 4 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Reading groups (**66%**, 11 CSLs, 10 CMLs and 2 ILs), or
- Local history archive (**57%**, 10 CSLs, 9 CMLs and 1 IL).

The exceptions to this were E-book loans, and E-magazines/ newspapers, which were reported as supported by local authorities in **100%** (16 CSLs and 16 CMLs) and **96%** (13 CSLs and 13 CMLs) of cases respectively.

5.3.3 Income raising services

The majority of CLs reported that they currently offer at least one income raising service (81%, 46 of 57 respondents). The total number ranged from 0 to 9 and the mean number of income raising services currently offered was 3.

Of the 11 CLs (6 CSLs and 5 CMLs) who reported that they do not currently provide an income raising service, three noted that they plan to offer one in the future. As shown in Chart 4, the most commonly reported service currently provided was meeting room/ workspace hire, by **64%** of libraries (*14 CSLs, 22 CMLs and 2 ILs*).

Around half the libraries surveyed reported that they provide:

- Document laminating (**51%**, *11 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 1 IL*)
- Craft sales (**46%**, *6 CSLs, 18 CMLs and 2 ILs*); and
- Exhibition areas (**44%**, *7 CSLs, 16 CMLs and 1 IL*)

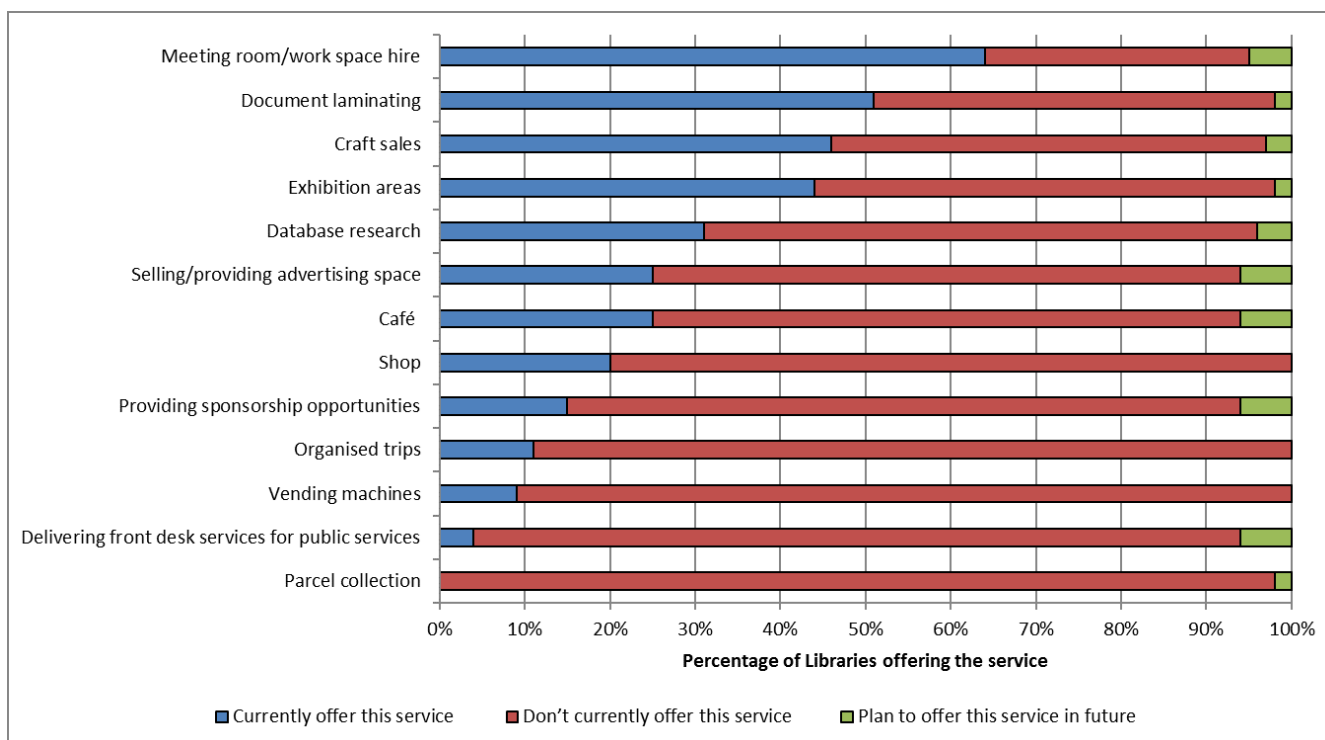
A third said they provide database research (**31%**, *6 CSLs and 11 CMLs*) and a quarter offer selling/ advertising space (**25%**, *5 CSLs, 8 CMLs and 1 IL*); and a café (**25%**, *5 CSLs, 7 CMLs and 2 ILs*); whilst one fifth provide a shop (**20%**, *4 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL*).

Parcel collection was not offered by any of the CLs surveyed. In addition:

- 2 libraries deliver front desk services for public services (**4%**, *1 CSL and 1 CML*)
- 5 offer a vending machine (**9%**, *1 CSL, 3 CMLs and 1 IL*)
- 6 provide organised trips (**11%**, *4 CMLs and 2 ILs*) and
- 8 provide sponsorship opportunities (**15%**, *3 CSLs, 2 CMLs and 3 ILs*).

Although CSL and CML libraries reported providing a number of similar income raising services, there were some notable differences. For example, a higher proportion of CMLs reported providing craft sales (**52%**, compared to **29%** of CSLs); database research (**42%**, compared to **29%** of CSLs); and exhibition areas (**56%**, compared to **33%** of CSLs). This may be somewhat related to the nature of CMLs, and their increased reliance on additional, sustainable sources of funding.

Chart 4 - Income raising services provided by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 59 (except craft sales n=57; document laminating n=57; café n=55; shop n=55; selling/providing advertising space n=55; exhibition areas n=55; vending machines n=54; providing sponsorship opportunities n=54; parcel collection n=54; database research n=54; delivering front desk services for public services n=53; organised trips n=53)

Overall, the majority of CLs reported that they did not receive any financial or in-kind local authority support for delivering income-raising services, including:

- Document laminating (**100%**, 10 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Exhibition areas (**100%**, 6 CSLs, 13 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Sponsorship activities (**100%**, 1 CSL, 2 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Front desk services for public services (**100%**, 1 CSL and 1 CML)
- Organised trips (**100%**, 4 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Meeting room/ work space hire (**94%**, 12 CSLs, 19 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Café (**92%**, 3 CSLs, 7 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Advertising space (**92%**, 4 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Craft sales (**91%**, 5 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Shop (**90%**, 2 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL); and
- Vending machines (**80%**, 1 CSL, 2 CMLs and 1 IL).

The exception to this was the delivery of database research, for which **62%** (4 CSLs and 6 CMLs) reported receiving financial and/ or in-kind support from their local

authority.

6.0 Service Effectiveness and Efficiency

6.1 Service Efficiency

Libraries were asked how efficient they felt their library services are and the majority of respondents reported that they felt their services were running efficiently. **30%** (5 CSLs, 11 CMLs and 2 ILs) reported that they were 'very efficient', where all or most services are running efficiently.

Almost two thirds (**63%**, 15 CSLs, 21 CMLs and 1 IL) reported that they were 'quite efficient', with room for improvement for a minority of services. Only 4 libraries (**7%**, 3 CSLs, 1 CML and 1 IL) reported that they perceived themselves to be 'quite inefficient' with room for improvement for the majority of services; and no libraries reported that they were very inefficient.

6.2 Effectiveness of core, enhanced and income-raising services

The majority of libraries reported that each of their core services was running effectively. As shown in Chart 5,³¹ the book loans service was rated as being most effective with **98%** of libraries (21 CSLs, 30 CMLs and 3 ILs) who provide this service rating it as being very or quite effective. Similarly, CLs rated the following services as very or quite effective:

- Computer access **94%** (19 CSLs, 29 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Photocopying/ printing **91%** (17 CSLs, 29 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Wi-Fi **90%** (20 CSLs, 26 CMLs and 3 ILs), and
- National programmes **90%** (18 CSLs, 27 CMLs and 2 ILs)

The least effective core service reported overall was DVD/CD loans with **13%** (2 CSLs and 3 CMLs) rating their service as quite or very ineffective.

The enhanced services that most libraries rated as being very or quite effective overall, included:

- Parent and baby groups (**92%**, 5 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Community events (**87%**, 14 CSLs, 23 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Reading groups (**77%**, 11 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Creative groups (**73%**, 8 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- e-magazines/ newspapers (**68%**, 9 CSLs and 8 CMLs), and

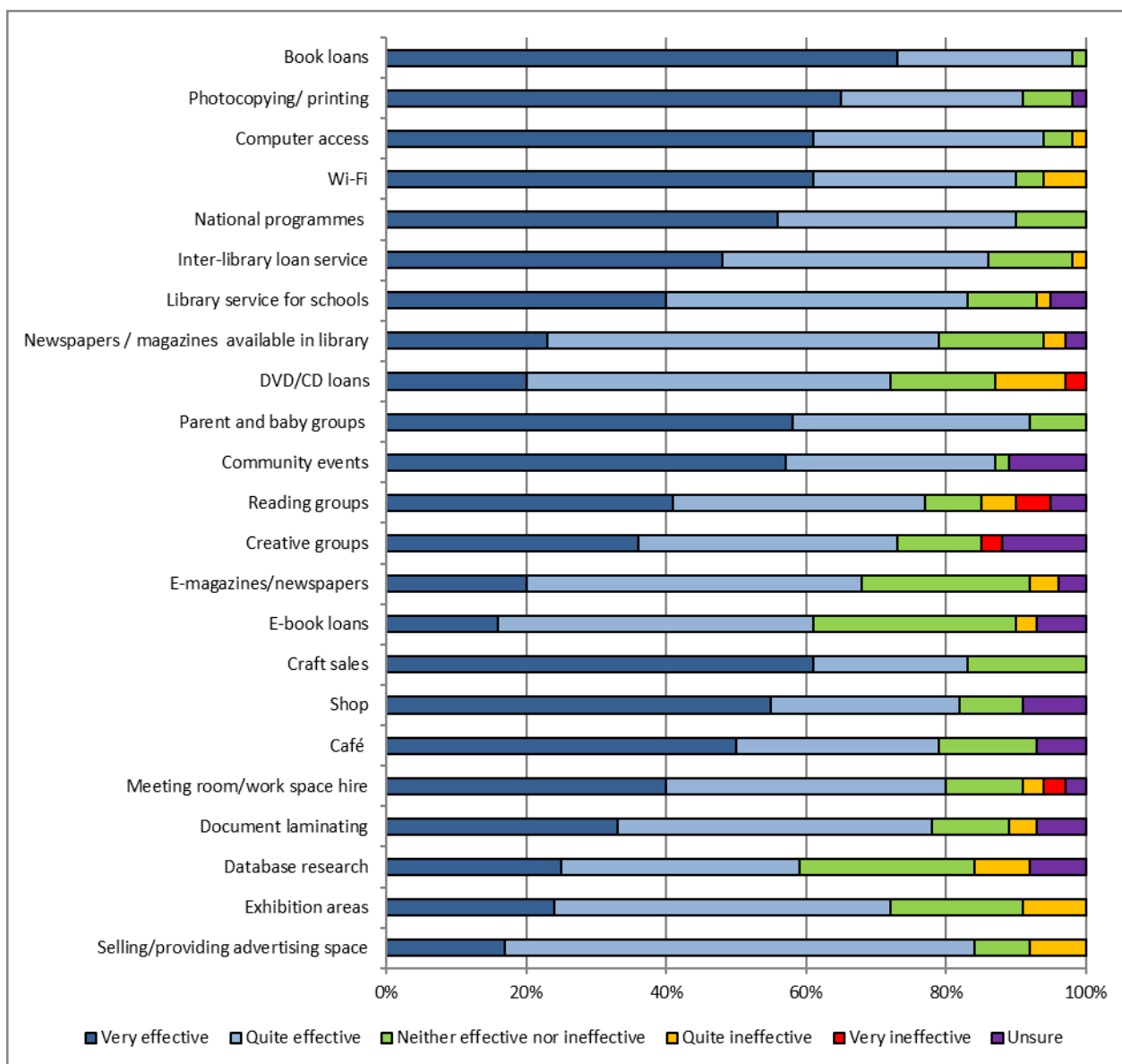
³¹ Core, enhanced and income raising services listed by the highest proportion of respondents rating each service as very or quite effective.

- e-book loans (**61%**, 11 CSLs and 8 CMLs).

Overall, income raising services were similarly rated as effective by the majority of libraries. For example, the income raising services rated as very or quite effective by the highest proportion of libraries were:

- Craft sales (**83%**, 4 CSLs, 13 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Selling/ providing advertising space (**83%**, 3 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Shop (**82%**, 3 CSLs, 5 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Meeting room/ work space hire (**80%**, 8 CSLs, 18 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Café (**79%**, 4 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Document laminating (**78%**, 7 CSLs, 13 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Exhibition areas (**71%**, 5 CSLs, 9 CMLs and 1 IL); and
- Database research (**58%**, 3 CSLs and 4 CMLs)

Chart 5 - Effectiveness of core, enhanced and income-raising services as rated by community-supported, community-managed, and independent librariesⁱⁱⁱ



Base: 56 (except photocopying/ printing n=54; computer access n=54; Wi-Fi n=54; National programmes n=52; Inter-library loan service n=42; Library service for schools n=42; Newspapers/ magazines available in library n=39; DVD/ CD loans n=40; Parent and baby groups n=12; Community events n=46; Reading groups n=39; Creative groups n=33; E-magazines/ newspapers n=25; E-book loans n=31; Craft sales n=23; Shop n=11; Café n=14; Meeting room/ work space hire n=35; Document laminating n=27; Database research n=12; Exhibition areas n=21; Selling/ providing advertising space n=12)

Some libraries provided additional comments regarding the provision and efficacy of their services. For example, some noted that they had received positive user feedback since becoming a CL and others reported providing, or planning to provide, a greater range of services.

A common concern between CL models was the availability of physical space and the way in which this may limit libraries' capacity to deliver more and varied services. Similarly, a lack of volunteers with the appropriate experience and skillset was cited as a concern amongst all libraries, particularly regarding their ability to deliver effective services.

“We are physically a small library and are very limited in opportunities for revenue generation. We do not have a separate room that we can hire out so most events / activities have to be outside of normal library hours and involve moving the book racks each time”

“Shortages of staff and volunteers means that we are unable to reach out to the three local schools in the way we would like to”

“We have received positive feedback from users about our core services and additional activities, for example increased liaison with the local primary school”

“A café is planned and the current library space will be converted into a theatre/conference space. We will then be able to offer a wider range of services such as reading groups, homework clubs, health clubs, as there will be more staff available”

6.3 User satisfaction

Most libraries also reported that they perceived the users of each of their core services to be satisfied with the services they deliver. As shown in Chart 6, the core services that libraries reported users would be quite or very satisfied with were: national programmes (**92%**, 21 CSLs, 25 CMLs and 2 ILs), computer access (**98%**, 22 CSLs, 29 CMLs and 3 ILs), and book loans (**100%**, 22 CSLs, 30 CMLs and 3 ILs).

DVD/CD loans was rated as the core service that libraries perceived users would be least satisfied with, but overall was still rated highly by **69%** (14 CSLs, 12 CMLs and 1 IL).

The enhanced services that most libraries reported that users would be very or quite satisfied with were:

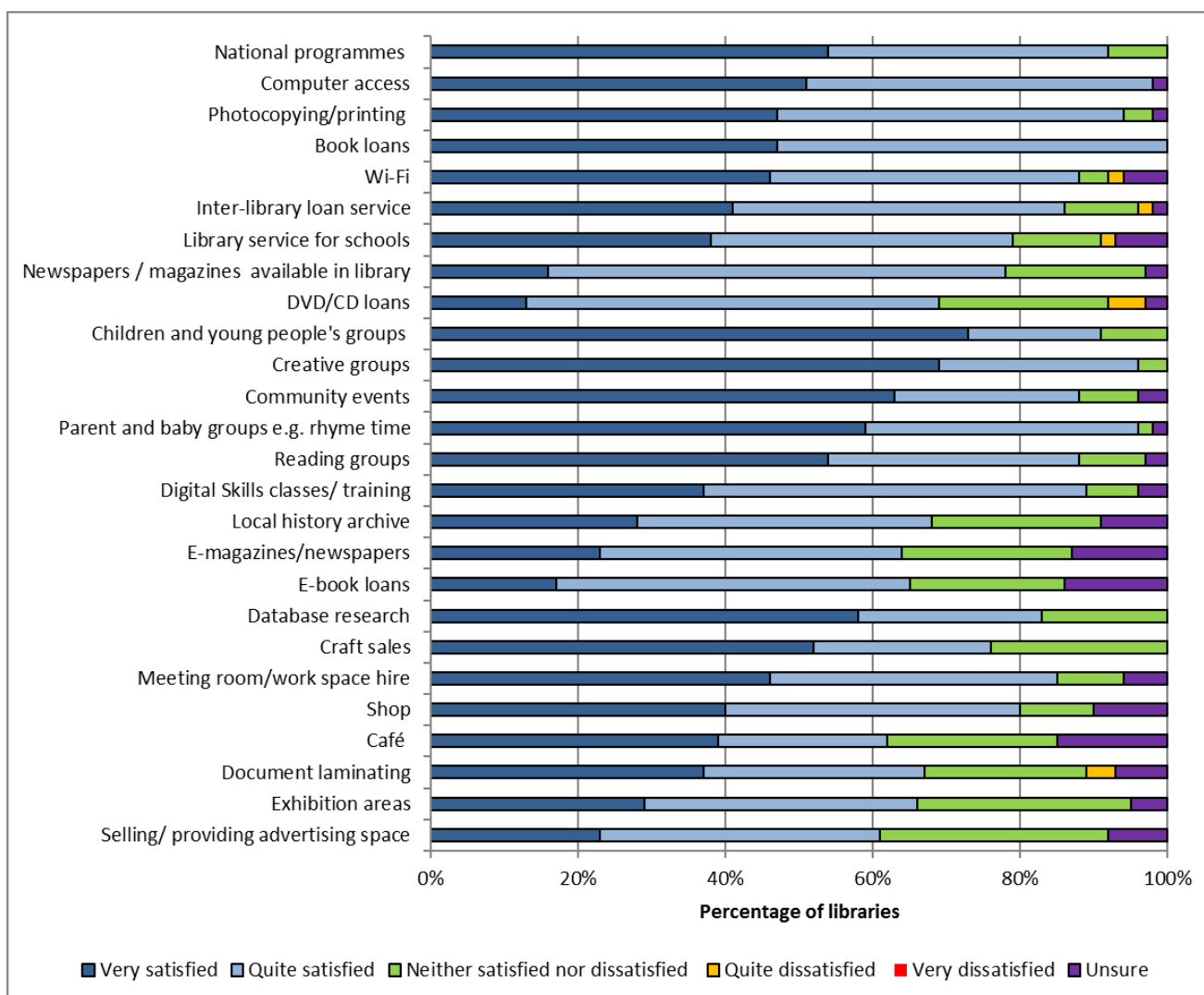
- Creative groups (**96%**, 9 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Parent and baby groups (**96%**, 18 CSLs, 21 CMLs and 3 ILs)

- Children and young people's groups (**91%**, 7 CSLs, 2 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Reading groups (**89%**, 12 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Digital skills classes/ training (**89%**, 7 CSLs, 15 CMLs and 2 ILs); and
- Community events (**88%**, 16 CSLs, 23 CMLs and 3 ILs)

The income-raising services that libraries were most likely to report that users were very or quite satisfied with, were:

- Meeting room/ work space hire (**85%**, 9 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 2 ILs)
- Database research (**83%**, 5 CSLs and 5 CMLs)
- Shop (**80%**, 3 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Craft sales (**76%**, 3 CSLs, 11 CMLs and 2 ILs); and
- Café (**62%**, 4 CSLs, 3 CMLs and 1 IL).

Chart 6 - User satisfaction of core, enhanced and income-raising services as rated by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries^{iv}



Base: 55 (except National programmes n=52 ; photocopying/ printing n=53; Wi-Fi n=54; Inter-library loan service n=42; library service for schools n=42; Newspapers/ magazines available in library n=37; DVD/ CD loans n=39; Children and young people's groups n=11; creative groups n=26; Community events n=48; Parent and baby groups n=44; Reading groups n=35; Digital skills classes/ training n=27; Local history archive n=35; E-magazines/ newspapers n=22; E-book loans n=29; Database research n=12; Craft sales n=21; Meeting room/ work space hire n=33; Shop n=10; Café n=13; Document laminating n=27; Exhibition areas n=21; Selling/ providing advertising space n=13)

6.4 Barriers to growth

Libraries were asked to identify the main barriers to their library's growth and/or services. The most commonly reported barriers reported by both CSLs and CMLs, as shown in Chart 7, included:

- Volunteer availability, cited by **66%** (16 CSLs, 22 CMLs and 2 ILs);
- Funding **56%** (12 CSLs, 20 CMLs and 2 ILs); and
- Building restrictions **43%** (9 CSLs, 15 CMLs and 2 ILs).

The library's relationship with the local council was cited as a barrier by **18%** (3 CSLs, 7 CMLs and 1 IL); and staff availability by **8%** (2 CSLs and 3 CMLs). Only one library (a CML) reported that they do not have any barriers to growth.

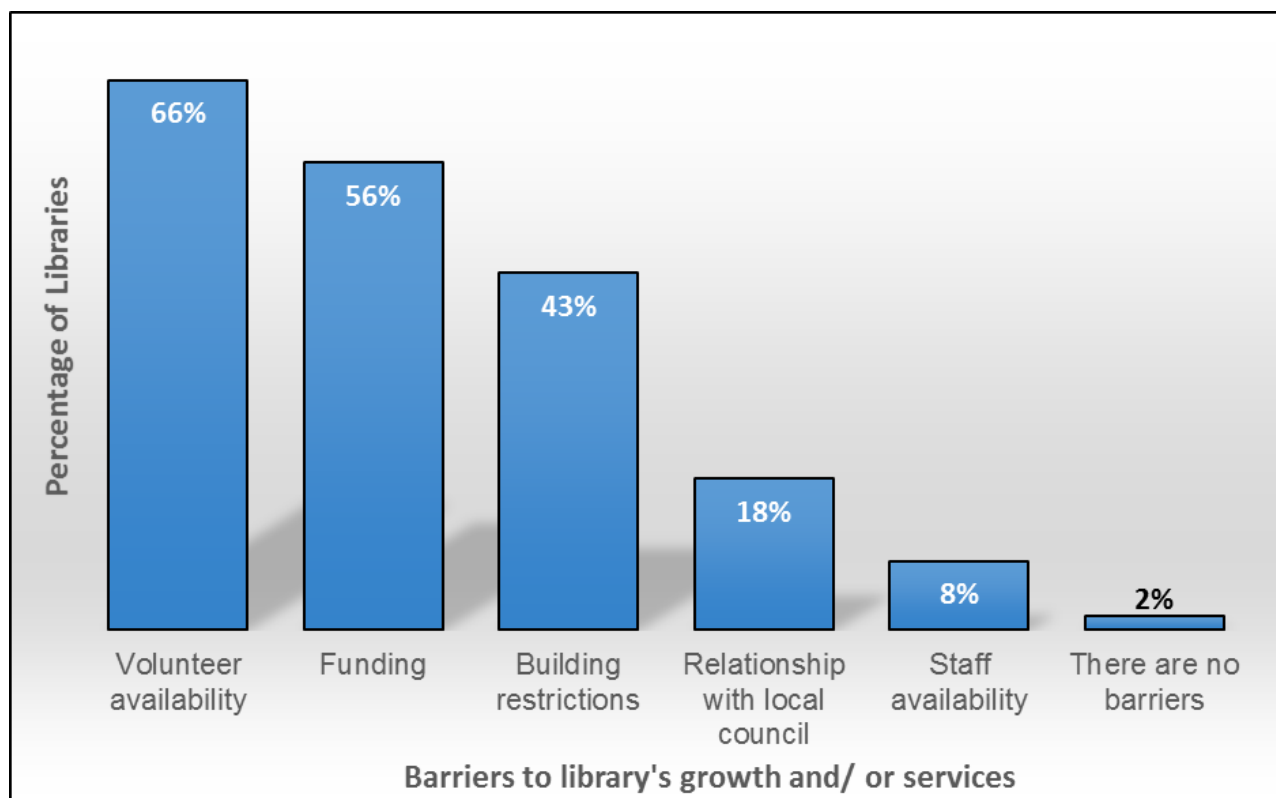
“Our volunteer levels are low and it is a continual struggle to recruit people with the right qualities”

“The council have only agreed funding for a four year period. If funding then ceases, the remaining sources of funding would not generate enough income to keep the library open”.

“The Library is small so this restricts some of the services that we offer and makes others unviable”

“Communication is a perennial issue; for example logistics of deliveries can be difficult, usually owing to LA staffing issues, and on-going training is logistically almost impossible”

Chart 7 - Barriers to growth reported by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 58 (except Volunteer availability n=55; and Relationship with local council n=55)

7.0 Resourcing the Libraries

7.1 Volunteer and staff numbers

Library respondents were asked how their libraries were resourced in terms of numbers of paid staff and volunteers. As might be expected, the majority of respondents reported that their libraries have volunteers (**98%**, 60 of 61 libraries) and the total number of registered volunteers per library ranged from 9 to 100.

ILs and CMLs had the highest mean number of volunteers (42 and 42 respectively); followed by CSLs (mean number =33). This may be related to the degree of self-management led by the local community, in conjunction with a certain level of support provided by the local authority. Volunteers were most likely to be aged 60+ (**70%**), followed by 25-60 years of age (**23%**), 16-24 (**3.5%**) and under 16 (**3.4%**).

Only around one fifth of CLs (6 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL) reported that they have dedicated paid staff regularly in attendance at the library. Of the 13 CLs with paid staff, 8 reported that they have 1 FTE employee in paid employment by the library (5 CSLs and 3 CMLs). Four libraries said that they have 2 FTEs (1 CSL and 3 CMLs)

and one IL said they have 9 FTEs.

7.2 Length of service

More than half of CLs surveyed reported that, since becoming a CL, their number of registered volunteers had increased (**59%**, 16 CSLs, 16 CMLs and 2 ILs). Just over a third (**34%**, 7 CSLs, 13 CMLs and 1 IL) said the number had stayed the same, and only 2 libraries (both of whom were CMLs) said the number of volunteers had decreased. One CML was unsure.

In addition, around half of the CLs surveyed reported that, on average, their volunteers stay involved with the library for more than 3 years (**53%**, 10 CSLs, 19 CMLs and 2 ILs). A further **16%** (3 CSLs and 6 CMLs) said their volunteers are typically involved for between 2 and 3 years, and **10%** (4 CSLs, 1 CML and 1 IL) said between 1 and 2 years.

By contrast, only 2 libraries (3%, both CML) reported that their volunteers are only involved for between 6 months and 1 year and 10 (**17%**, 6 CSLs and 4 CMLs) were unsure how long their volunteers stay involved with the library.

7.3 Volunteer and staff satisfaction

The majority of respondents reported that they perceive the volunteers and paid staff at their library to be generally satisfied with their role:

- **95%** (20 CSLs, 32 CMLs and 3 ILs) felt that volunteers were either very or quite satisfied; and
- **92%** (4 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL) felt that paid staff were either very or quite satisfied.

No libraries reported that they felt volunteers were dissatisfied with their role, and only one library (a CSL) noted that paid staff may be quite dissatisfied.

7.4 Training

Of the libraries who have volunteers, a large majority (**98%**, 20 CSLs, 29 CMLs and 3 ILs) reported that they perceive training for volunteers as 'quite' or 'very useful' and that they currently provide formal and/ or informal training for all their volunteers (**98%**, 24 CSLs, 32 CMLs and 3 ILs).

As shown in Chart 8, training on the library management system was the most commonly reported form of training provided by CLs, by **92%** of respondents (21 CSLs, 30 CMLs and 3 ILs). Other training for volunteers commonly provided by libraries included:

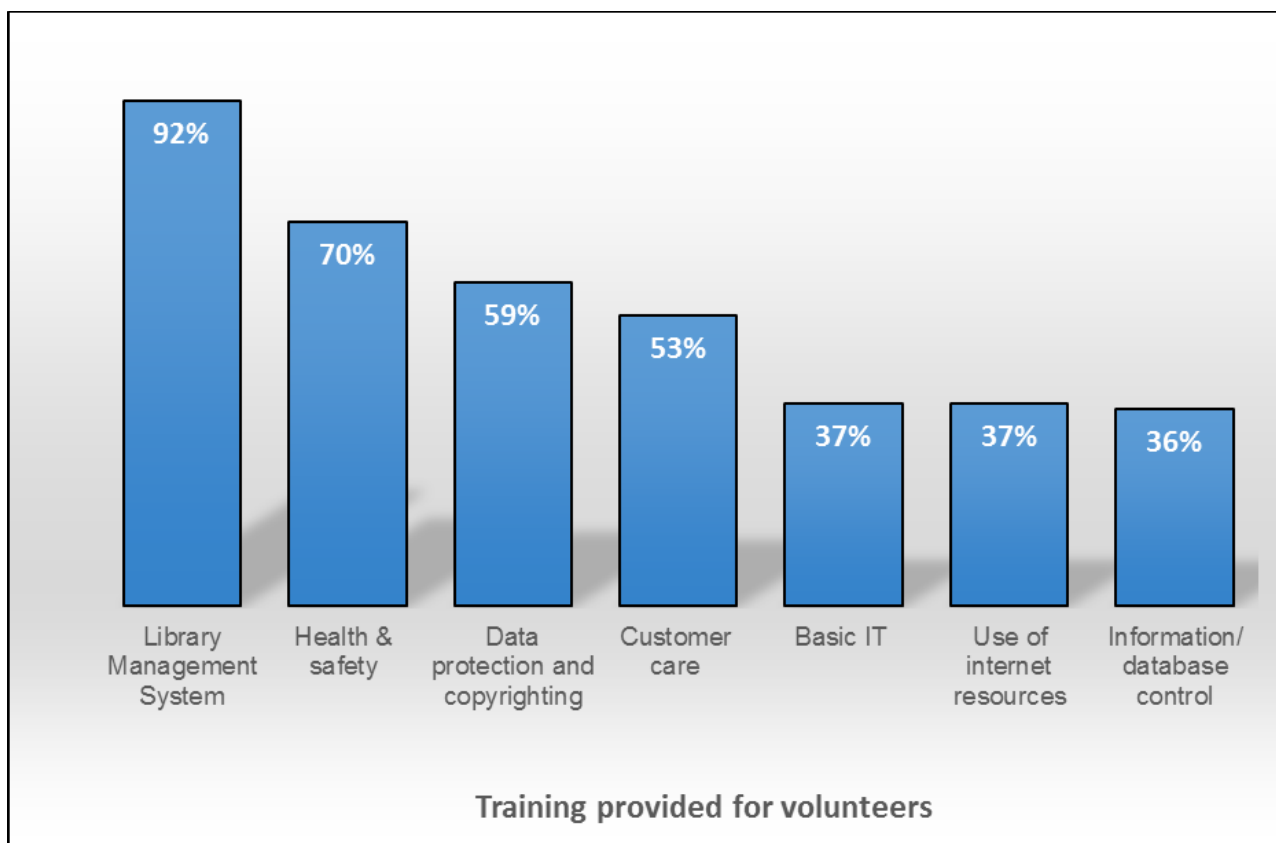
- Health and safety (**70%**, 14 CSLs, 24 CMLs and 3 ILs)
- Data protection and copyrighting (**59%**, 14 CSLs, 17 CMLs and 3 ILs); and
- Customer care (**53%**, 14 CSLs, 15 CMLs and 2 ILs).

Lastly, around a third of libraries also reported providing:

- Basic IT training (**37%**, 6 CSLs, 15 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Use of internet resources (**37%**, 7 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 1 IL); and
- Information/ database control (**36%**, 3 CSLs, 16 CMLs and 2 ILs).

CMLs were proportionally more likely than CSLs to provide training on use of internet resources (44% of CMLs, compared to 29% of CSLs).

Chart 8 - Types of training provided for volunteers reported by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 59

Of the 13 libraries with paid staff who responded, **62%** (2 CSLs, 5 CMLs and 1 IL) reported that they provide in-house training. The types of training most commonly provided for paid staff included health and safety (**100%**, 2 CSLs, 5 CMLs and 1 IL); library management system (**88%**, 2 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 1 IL); and data protection and copyright training (**75%**, 2 CSLs, 3 CMLs and 1 IL).

8.0 Financial Sustainability

8.1 Current income

Except for ILs, most libraries surveyed reported that they receive some form of financial and/ or in-kind support from their local authority. Unsurprisingly, CSLs were most likely to report that they receive core/ majority funding from their local authority (24 libraries; **96%** of CSLs in total sample); most CMLs reported that they receive in-kind support (19 libraries; **61%** of CMLs). As expected, all 3 responding ILs confirmed that they do not receive any funding or in-kind support from their local authority.

The most common forms of in-kind support provided by the local authority included:^v

- Connection to the library management system (1 CSL and 8 CMLs)
- Provision of new books (8 CMLs)
- Provision of computers (7 CMLs)
- Support and advice helpline (6 CMLs)
- Professional library staff (5 CMLs); and
- Inter-library loan transfers/ returns (5 CMLs).

Around two thirds of respondents (**66%**, 14 CSLs, 23 CMLs and 1 IL) reported that they receive financial and/ or in-kind support from sources other than their local authority.

Of these, 32 libraries provided further details regarding the nature of this support.. The most common sources included financial and/ or in-kind support from their Parish Council (1 CSL and 10 CMLs); grants/ donations (2 CSLs and 5 CMLs); and fundraising/ earned income (2 CSLs and 4 CMLs).^{vi}

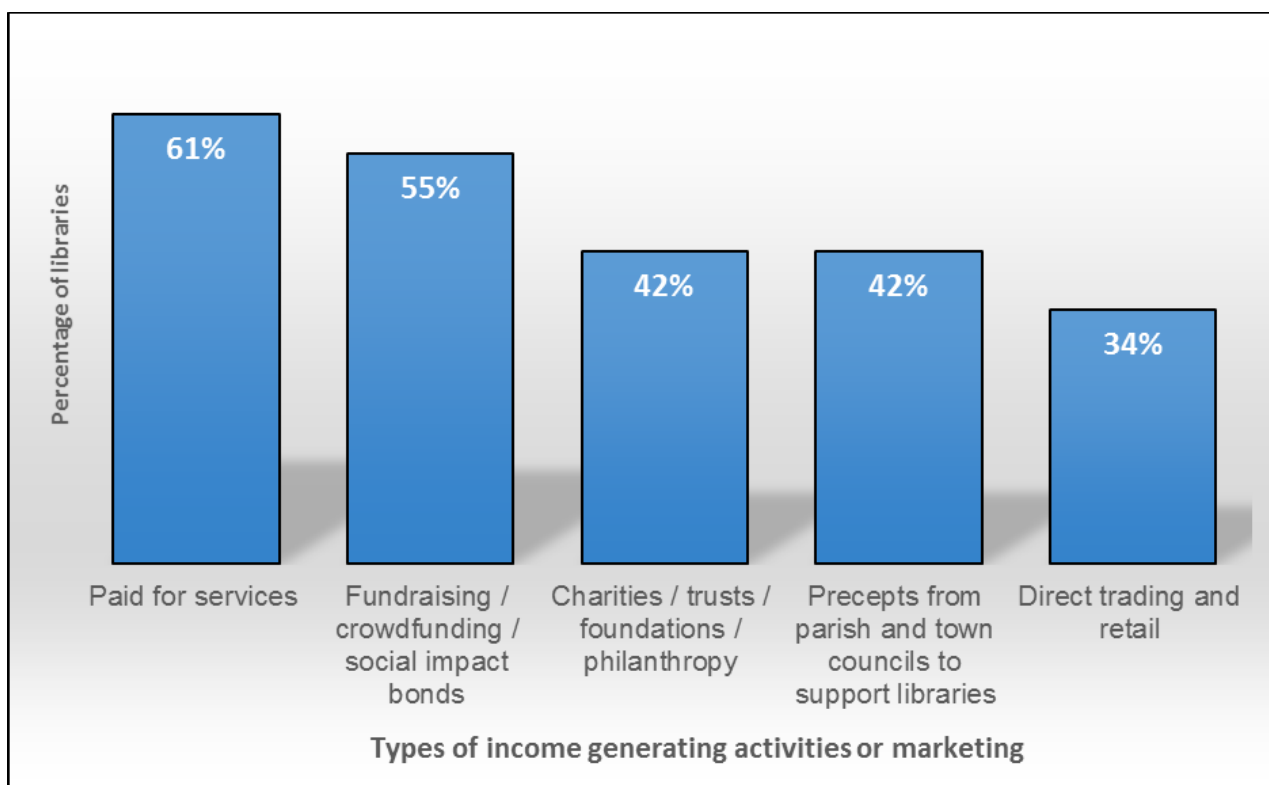
When asked about their income-generating activities, libraries tended to report a range of activities. As shown in Chart 9, the most common forms of activity cited by libraries were:

- Paid for services (**61%**, 8 CSLs, 12 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Fundraising/ crowdfunding (**55%**, 6 CSLs, 12 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Charities/ trust donations (**42%**, 6 CSLs, 9 CMLs and 1 IL)
- Precepts from parish and town councils (**42%**, 5 CSLs and 11 CMLs); and
- Direct trading and retail (**34%**, 6 CSLs, 6 CMLs and 1 IL).

Less commonly cited activities included community infrastructure levy/ section 106 agreements; non-library service public contracts; private sector service contracts/ partnerships; and digital services.

The most common paid for services that libraries reported providing were: room hire, computer use, and printing/ photocopying. In addition, 'Friends of' fundraising events were commonly reported; as were donations or grants from national charities/ organisations.

Chart 9 - Types of current income generating activities or marketing reported by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 38

8.2 Future Income

Around two thirds of CLs (**67%**, 39 of 58 libraries) reported that they have plans in place for funding/ income generation over the next 3 years. The remaining libraries did not have plans in place (**21%**, 12 libraries) or were unsure (**12%**, 7 libraries).

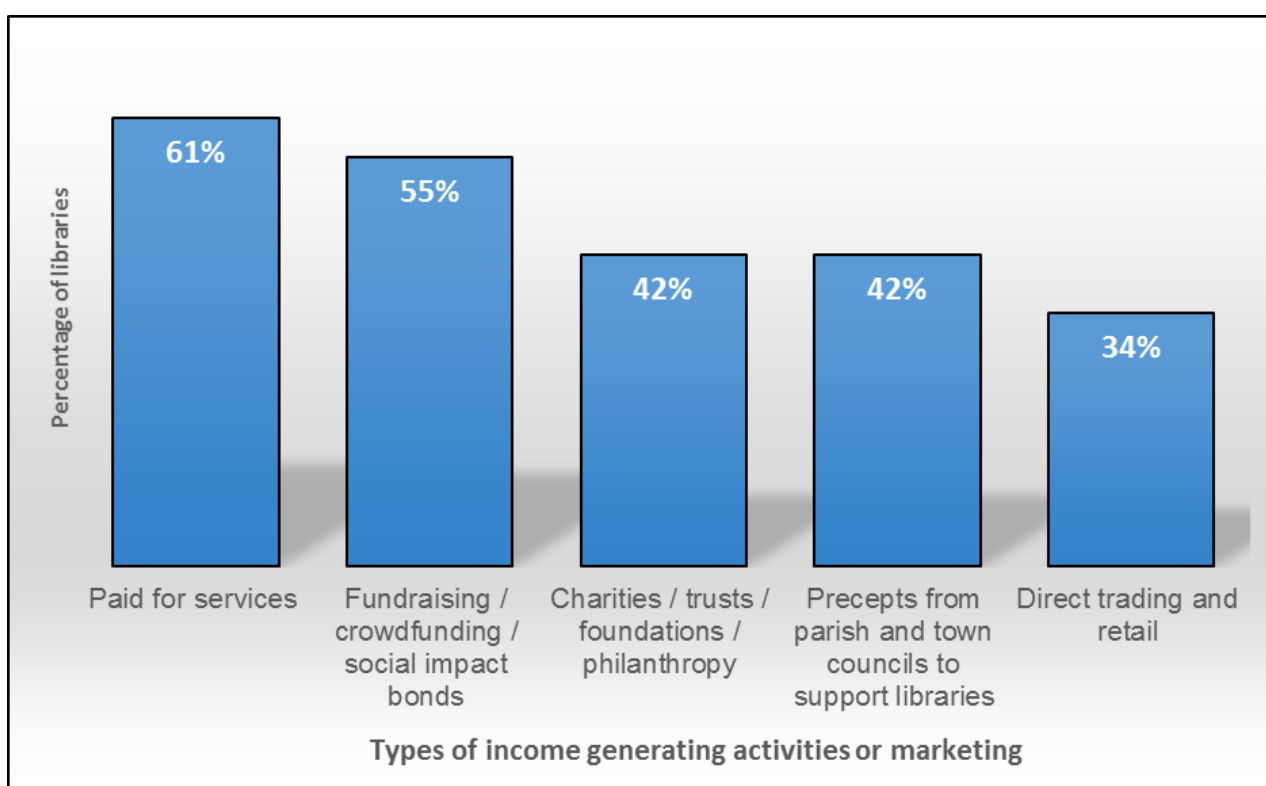
Where CLs said they have future funding plans in place, they reported that the local authority would continue to provide core/ majority future income (**57%**, 8 libraries) or minor funding (**29%**, 4 libraries). For CMLs, **36%** (8 libraries) reported that they would receive minor funding from their local authority, whereas **67%** (14 libraries) said their future income would come from sources other than the local authority.

CLs reported similar planned future income generating activities to those they are

currently undertaking. As shown in Chart 10, the most common forms of planned income activities were: paid for services (**72%**, 10 CSLs, 14 CMLs and 2 ILs), charity donations (**54%**, 6 CSLs, 11 CMLs and 3 ILs) and fundraising 20 (**54%**, 6 CSLs, 12 CMLs and 2 ILs).

In addition, some CLs reported they plan to generate income from direct trading and retail (**33%**, 6 CSLs, 4 CMLs and 2 ILs); precepts from parish and town councils (**31%**, 4 CLS and 7 CMLs) and community infrastructure levy/ section 106 agreements (**28%**, 4 CSLs, 5 CMLs and 1 IL).

Chart 10 - Types of planned income generating activities or marketing reported by community-supported, community-managed, and independent libraries



Base: 39

9.0 Community library user survey

As part of the research proposal, a separate survey of library users was developed and undertaken through the case study community libraries. The survey was undertaken to provide additional insight into the efficiency and effectiveness of community library service provision, and to enhance, compare and validate the views of community libraries that responded to the user satisfaction element of the online baseline survey.

9.1 Library Demographics

In total, **161 users** responded to a postal survey, representing a **39.2%** response rate from the **410 surveys** distributed evenly **across 9 CLs**.

[Please note that due to variability in the number of responses to each question within the survey, percentages reported will vary due to differing bases and/or non-responses. Response numbers will be provided against each statistic reported.]

However, **given the small CL sample size, the survey cannot be considered as representative of user experience across the CL sector** as a whole, but should be **considered indicative of CL user experience** across England.

Most respondents were aged 55 years and over (**84%**, *135 out of 161*), with the remaining 26 respondents being between the ages of 16 and 54 years of age. Over half of the library users reported that they are 'retired' (**61%**, *97 out of 159*). Two thirds of respondents who completed the survey were female (**66%**, *107 out of 160*) compared to **33%** males (*53 out of 160*).

38 respondents (**24%**, *38 out of 161*) were either in full-time or part-time employment and 10 (**6%**, *10 out of 161*) were currently unemployed. Only 3 library users (**2%** *3 out of 161*) were students and 11 (**7%**, *11 out of 161*) did not provide their current employment status.

9.2 Library usage

When asked how often they visit the library, respondents reported:

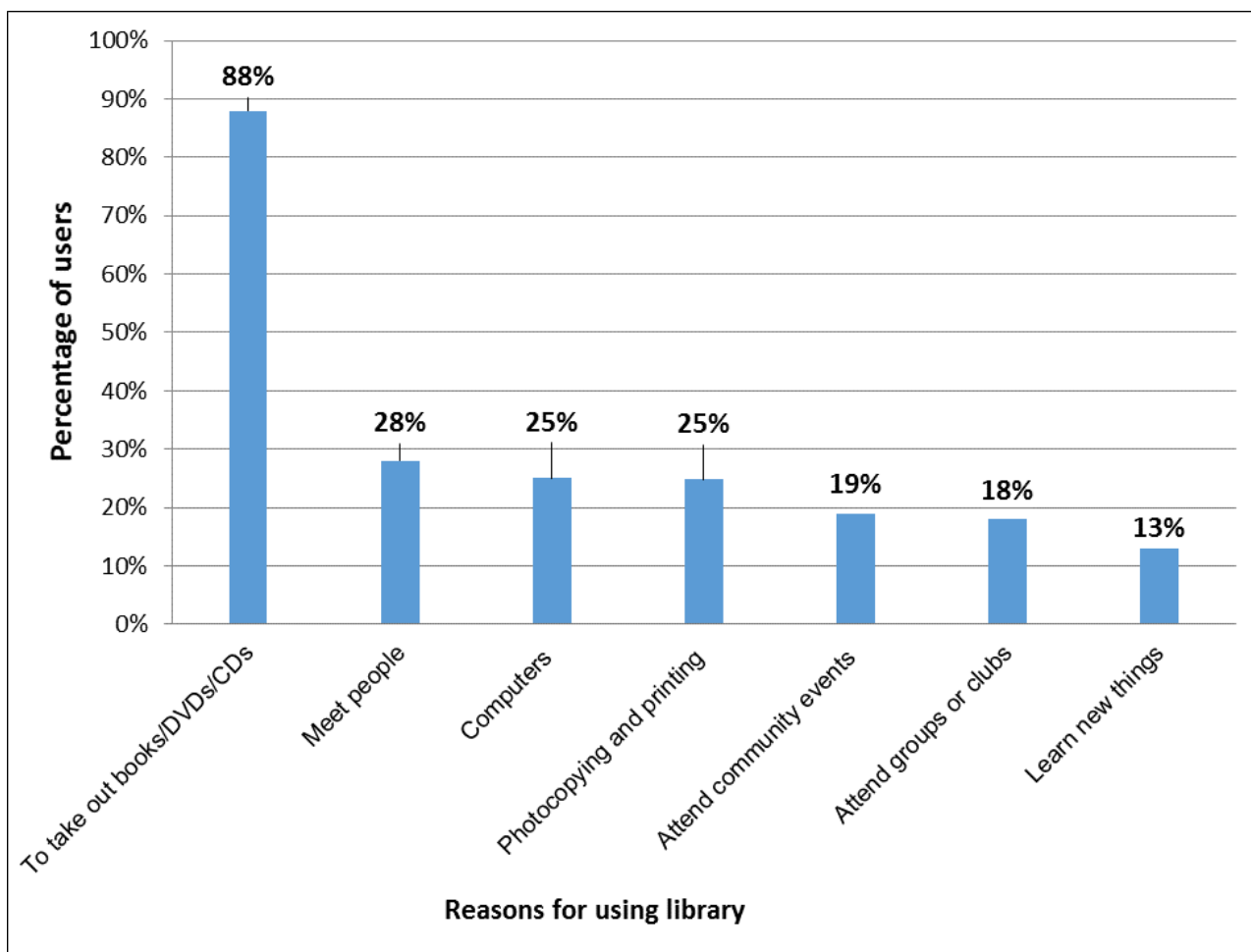
- **46%** (74 out of 161) reported that they visit 'once or twice a week'
- **32%** (51 out of 161) visit the library 'every couple of weeks'
- **10%** (16 out of 161) visit 'once a month'
- **7%** (12 out of 161) visit 'every day or almost every day'
- **4%** (7 out of 161) visit 'every few months' and
- **1** user visits their library 'once or twice a year'

Library users were asked why they used their community library and, as may be expected, (shown in Chart 11) a large proportion of respondents reported '*taking out books/DVDs or CDs*' (**88%**, 142 out of 161) as one of their main reasons for using the library.

Other primary reasons for using the library included, '*to meet people*', reported by nearly a third (**28%**, 45 out of 161) of users, and to '*use the photocopying and printing facilities*' and/or '*the computers/Wi-Fi*' (**25%**, 40 out of 161 and **25%**, 40 out of 161 respectively).

Furthermore, around one fifth of respondents reported that they used the library to '*attend community events*' and '*attend groups or clubs*' (**19%**, 30 out of 161 and **18%**, 28 out of 160 respectively). A small number of users attend their library '*to learn new things and/or develop skills through classes*' (**13%**, 21 out of 161).

Chart 11 - Frequency of library use by service amongst respondents



Base: 161 (multiple response question)

Respondents were also given the opportunity to specify any other reasons they use their library. 25 respondents provided comments, with the two most common reasons for using their library being 'reading/relaxation' (6) and 'using the library for their children' (4).

9.3 Types of library services used

In addition to the main reasons for visiting the library mentioned above, the libraries surveyed offered a wide range of other services that users could access. All provided the core services of access to Wi-Fi, computer access, book loans and photocopying and printing.

The vast majority of libraries also offered additional core services, including the availability of newspapers/magazines, inter-library loan service, national programmes, DVD/CD loans and a library service for schools. Having these services in close proximity within a community has been beneficial amongst library users, as

indicated by user comments:

“I can walk to choose my books to read, instead of having to include it as part of a major shopping trip in a nearby town”.

“A very important part of our village. Villagers would need to travel by car or bus / rail to reach the nearest (other) library”.

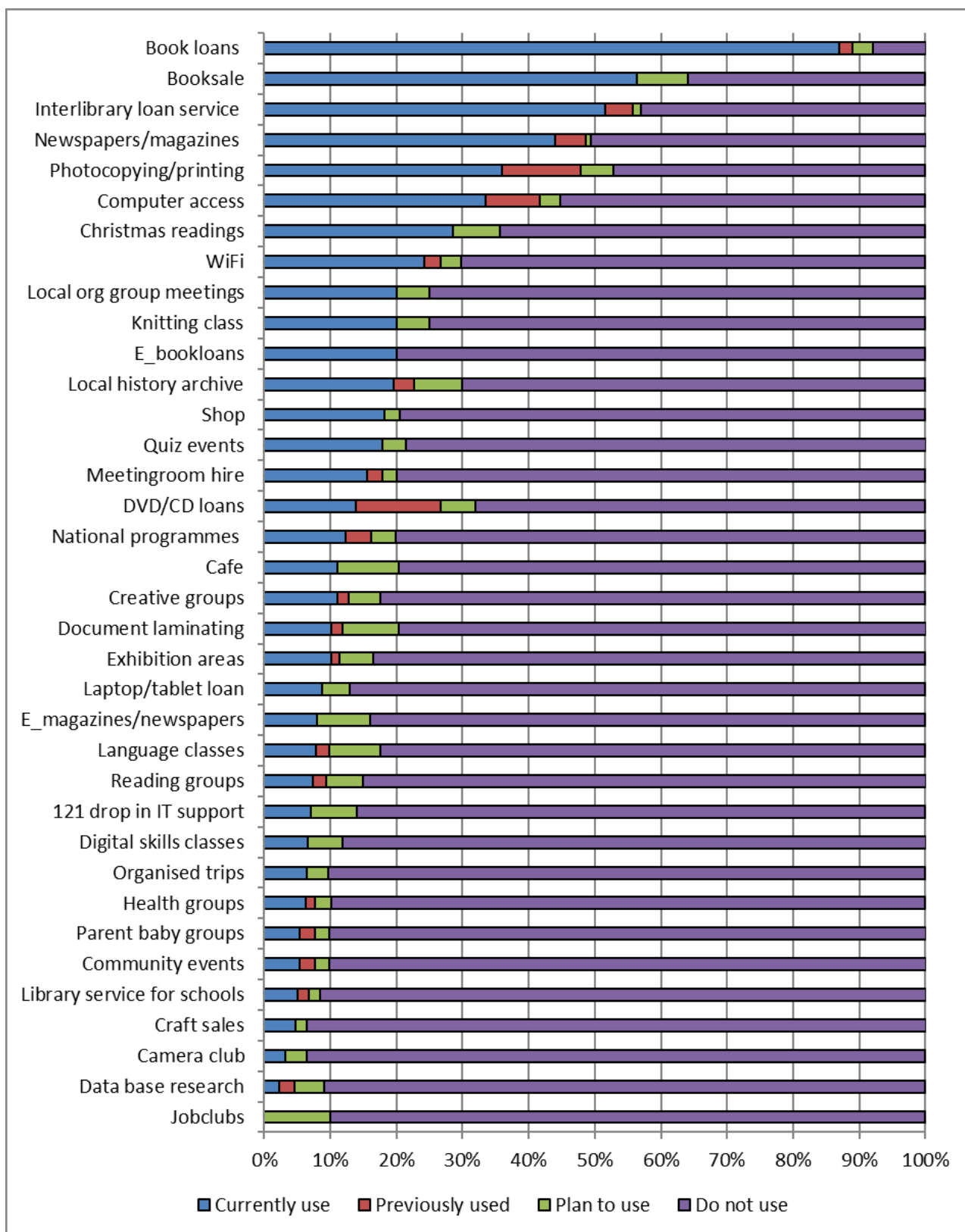
“Accessible books for all ages, especially important for those who cannot travel to libraries farther away. A welcoming space, where people are known, and care and attention is paid to the services being delivered”.

Chart 12 provides a comprehensive view of the range of services that library users most commonly accessed.³² The most commonly used service was ‘book loans’ (87%, 140), and over half of the users reported accessing ‘inter-library loans’ and ‘book sales’ (56%, 22 out of 39, 52%, 49 out of 95 respectively).

Just under half of respondents currently use ‘newspapers/ magazines’ (44%, 66 out of 150) and over a third use ‘photocopying/printing facilities’ (36%, 58 out of 161). Similarly, just over a third also ‘access computers’ (34%, 54 out of 161).

³² Services listed received at least a 10% response rate of total library user respondents.

Chart 12 - Range of library services accessed by users



Base: 161 (except Job clubs=20, data base research= 44. Camera club= 31, Craft sales= 63, library service for schools= 121, community events= 118, parent baby groups= 133, health groups= 79,

organised trips= 31, digital skills classes= 76, 121 drop in IT support= 43, reading groups= 53, language groups= 51, e-magazines/newspapers=25, laptop/tablet loan=23, exhibition areas=79, document laminating=59, creative groups=63, café=54, national programmes=130, DVD/CD loans=116, meeting room hire=90, quiz events=28, shop=44, local history archive=97, e-book loans=26, knitting class=20, local org group meetings=20, Christmas readings=28, newspapers/magazines=150, inter-library loan service=95, book sale=39)

Chart 12 also indicates a large proportion of respondents who 'do not use' a variety of services, such as 'craft sales', 'data base research', 'parent baby groups' and 'laptop/tablet loan'.

This result is accounted for by a combination of not all libraries surveyed offering all services, and users not accessing all of the services that are on offer. However, despite the proportion of users who cannot, or do not, access specified CL services, there were additional less tangible benefits that users identified that having their CL provides, most notably, community cohesion and opportunities for volunteering:

"...a meeting place for the community to engage with one another, creating a social forum".

"...a place to meet and chat with the 'locals'. It's a lifeline for older, lonely people".

"As with any community service it provides contact with the local population & events".

"In a small market town like ours, it's a focal hub where we can find local information i.e. bus times, what's going on, talk with local police".

"It completes community services within the village. It provides a service and an opportunity for people to volunteer".

"The benefits of a community library have been getting to know local people, finding a lovely book to read, finding out what is going on in the community and having access to all the services it provides if needed".

9.4 Perceived efficiency of community managed libraries

Library users were asked how efficient they feel the library services are. The majority of respondents reported that they felt library services were running efficiently. In particular, **68%** (109 out of 160) reported that they were 'very efficient', where all or most services are running efficiently.

Almost one third reported that they were 'quite efficient', with room for improvement for a minority of services (**28%**, 45 out of 160). Only **1%** (2 out of 161) library users

reported that they perceived the services to be *'quite inefficient'*, with room for improvement for the majority of services.

Only 1 user reported that they were *'very inefficient'*, where all or most services are running inefficiently and three users were *'unsure'*.

Regarding the importance of efficiency for library services, the majority of users reported that they felt that this was important to them, as illustrated by some of the user comments collected:

"We all have busy lives and like to complete our actions without too much delay".

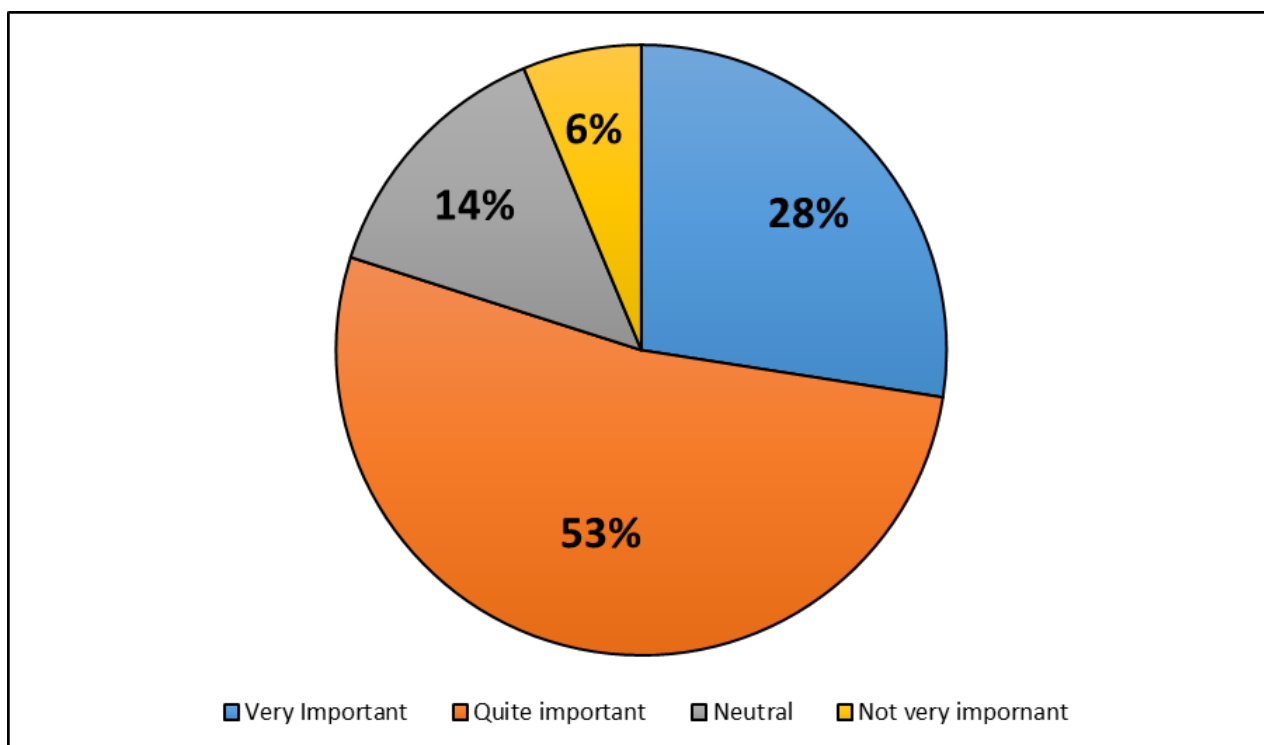
"It is important for things to run efficiently, as long as people are paid attention to as individuals".

"Being a volunteer managed library, efficiency (& effectiveness) becomes an important 'credible' issue".

Specifically, as Chart 13 shows, **28%** (44 out of 160) reported that efficiency was *'very important'* and around half of users reported (**53%**, 84 out of 161) that it was *'quite important'*.

22 respondents (**14%** 22 out of 161) were *'neutral'* around the importance of the efficiency and only **6%** (10 out of 161) of respondents reported that speed and efficiency were *'not very important'*. No users reported that efficiency was *'not at all important'*.

Chart 13 - User importance rating of efficiency of library services



Base: 160

9.5 Satisfaction with library services

Library users were asked how satisfied they were with the services that were offered within their library. Overall, **the large majority of users were satisfied**, however **each library surveyed offered a different range of services**, and subsequently **the base number of responses varies for each service**. It is important to take this into account when interpreting the results.

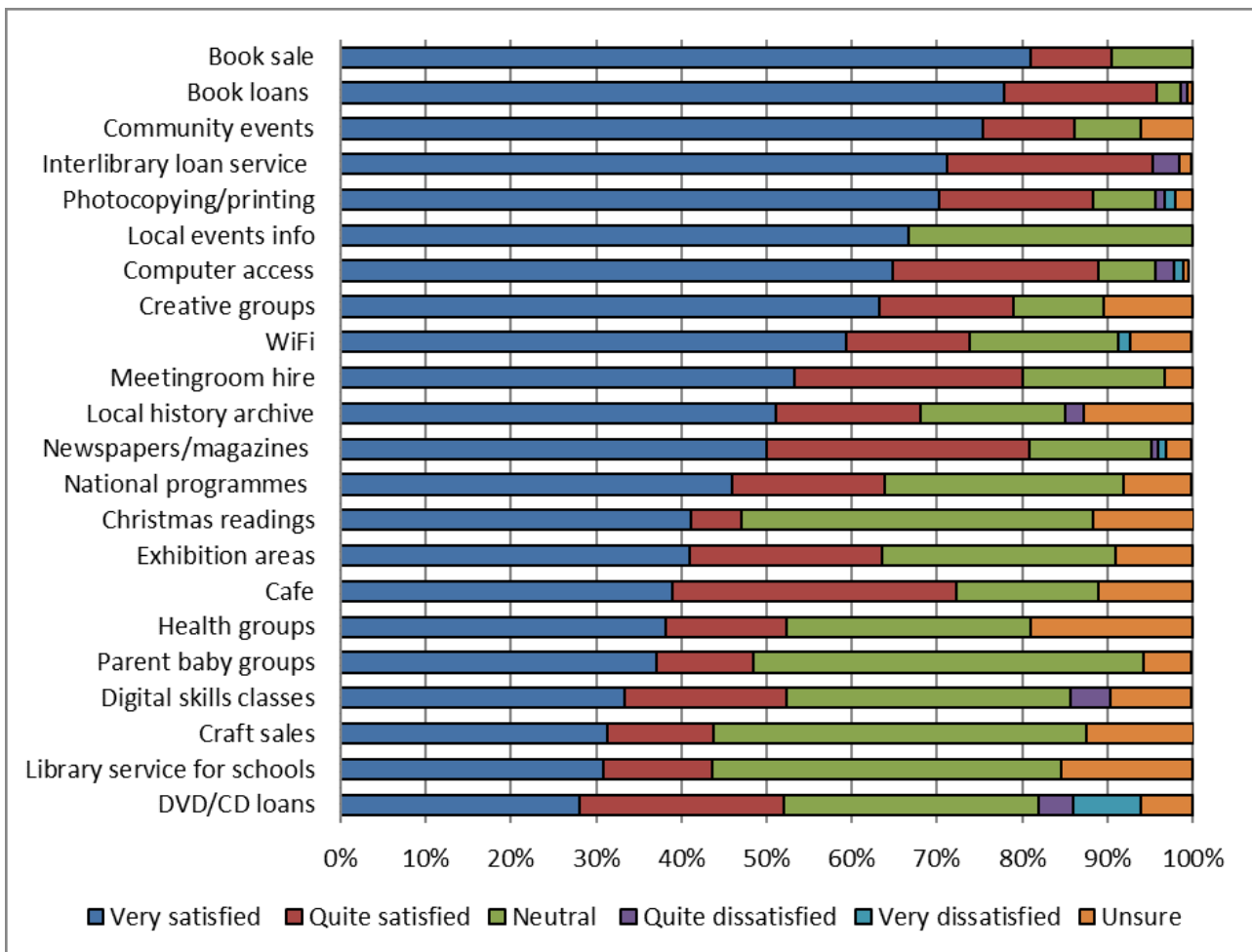
Chart 14 illustrates that the majority of respondents were 'very satisfied' with the majority of core and some enhanced services, for example

- Book sales (**81%**, 17 out of 21)
- Book loans (**78%**, 113 out of 145)
- Community events (**75%**, 49 out of 65)
- Inter-library loan service (**71%**, 47 out of 66)
- Photocopying/printing (**70%**, 66 out of 94)
- Local events information (**67%**, 4 out of 6)
- Computer access (**65%**, 59 out of 91)
- Creative groups (**63%**, 12 out of 17)
- Wi-Fi (**59%**, 41 out of 69)
- Meeting room hire (**53%**, 16 out of 30) and

- Access to newspapers/magazines (**50%**, 52 out of 104)

There was very little or no dissatisfaction with any of the library services available across all of the libraries surveyed, demonstrating the ability of the CLs within the survey to deliver services to a generally high standard from a user perspective.

Chart 14 - User satisfaction regarding library services^{vii}



Base: 161 (except; book loans=144, photocopying/printing=92, computer access=91, newspapers/magazines=105, community events=62, inter-library loan service= 66, Wi-Fi=65, local history archive=43, national programmes=46, book sale=23, meeting room hire=30, DVD/CD loans=47, parent baby groups=33, creative groups=17, exhibition areas=22, health groups=17, Christmas readings=16, café=22, digital skills classes=22, craft sales=16)

For the ‘reading groups’ and ‘shop’ services, the response rate was lower than **10%** (16 out of 160) although these are often referred to in the case studies, and therefore are of interest regarding satisfaction levels. The majority of respondents reported that they were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with ‘reading groups’ and ‘shop’ services (**60%** 9 out of 15, **75%** 9 out of 12 respectively). No respondents reported being dissatisfied with these specific services.

9.6 Future needs

Of the 159 users who responded, **96%** (153 out of 159) reported that they were 'very likely' to continue using their library in the future, with the remaining **4%** (6 out of 159) 'quite likely' to return.

Additionally, respondents were asked to comment on the types of future service, if any, that they would like to see provided by their community library, which in turn would encourage them to visit more. Out of the 62 library users who responded, many provided a wide range of specific individual services required; the most common responses included; *the use of café's/coffee machines, children's area/activities, computer lessons, more group sessions and more space within their library.*

It is not possible to comment on whether the community libraries sampled will be able to provide these additional services, and the user survey cannot definitively represent users of community libraries nationwide. However it can be argued that there appears to be demand from users to integrate a wider range of enhanced services into community libraries, assisting them to remain relevant to local needs and encouraging greater local engagement.

10.0 Stakeholder Perceptions of Community Managed Libraries

10.1 Purpose

As part of this research, a total of 10 local authority stakeholders representing between them all the 9 regions in England³³ were identified and invited to take part in an interview lasting approximately 1 hour to explore the following key themes:

- The library service history and provision of statutory services in the region; including if and how the local authority have been involved with community managed libraries;
- Where regional library services have adapted to include community managed libraries, what expectations were regarding their delivery; and perceptions of how efficiently community managed libraries perform;
- Opinions on the benefits or drawbacks of community managed libraries compared to pre-community managed models, particularly highlighting where community managed models have exceeded or under-performed against expectations; and
- Views on the future direction and sustainability of library services, in the context of both local authority and community managed library models.

Stakeholders were identified through the online baseline survey, interviews with library staff and volunteers, and consultation with the Libraries Taskforce and DCMS. They were sampled to triangulate the data and perceptions collected from other aspects of the research to provide a holistic view of the effectiveness and sustainability of CLs.

³³ Two stakeholders from the same region participated in an interview

10.2 Moving to a CML model

Local authority representatives reported a small range of factors that led to their decision to move to a CL model. Most notably, and perhaps unsurprisingly, reducing budgets from central government drove the majority (7) of local authorities to identify areas where they could make considerable financial savings. The remaining 2 local authorities were guided to their decision through a review of usage, efficiency and statutory requirements.. A total of 5 regional stakeholders confirmed that they conducted a needs assessment to decide whether a CL would form part of their statutory library service. The remaining 4 indicated that their CLs were still considered part of their statutory offer. The criteria to determine CLs' statutory service status tended to involve analysis of population density, numbers of library users, and the average time it would take for residents to access their closest library. The number of CLs which local authorities were involved with at time of interview varied from as little as none to a total of 34; but generally each local authority had relationships with fewer than 10 CLs, as reported by 7 out of 9 stakeholders. Notably however, **just under half of the stakeholders** interviewed indicated that they were, **as part of future plans, considering growing the number of CLs** in their local authority.

'We carried out a needs assessment based around what other local authorities reported. We looked at criteria, ranked libraries on a needs basis, and came up with list of what was affordable'

'From our point of view we are still able to meet our statutory obligations with the network of libraries we currently own, therefore the eight community libraries are outside of our statutory offer'

'Our library needs assessment involved drawing up criteria on the demographics of the sites, including how many people use those sites and whether they have a 30 minute drive time'

There was some variation in the level and duration of future support local authorities indicated they would provide for CLs. 3 stakeholders confirmed that their existing level of support would probably continue for the foreseeable future; whilst 2 indicated that future support would be dependent on the continuing success of the CLs in their remit. One stakeholder suggested that provision would be in place until their CMLs were self-sustaining, and another advised that support would be capped after a period of 4 years. The remaining two stakeholders either had very limited involvement with CLs or were unsure what support for CLs would look like in the

future.

10.3 Expectations for CMLs

Regional stakeholders reported having a variety of original expectations for CMLs; for some they had very few, whereas for others, support from the local authority was dependent on a number of indicators. 7 stakeholders reported that they had set expectations for their CMLs, including maintaining existing library services (5), significant financial savings in comparison to when the library was run by the local authority (4), and a fixed number of opening hours per week (2). However, the remaining 2 suggested that, because they had no formal relationship with CMLs, they had no original expectations or felt unable to comment. 3 stakeholders acknowledged that, although they had either service level agreements in place or clear expectations for CMLs, those expectations were particularly low.

All 7 of the **stakeholders who indicated they had original expectations believed that CMLs had either met or exceeded those expectations**. 4 stakeholders commented on how CMLs had upheld the quality of service/met expectations. Other observations included how CMLs had maintained the number of opening hours, visitor numbers, and book issues they had originally agreed (reported by 1 stakeholder each).

However, 5 out of the 7 LA stakeholders who indicated they had initial expectations of the CMLs maintained that they had exceeded their expectations; and for some, this was on multiple levels. For example, increased social capital; improving the range of activities provided at the library; using the library space more creatively; and having a strong volunteer base were all commented on by 2 stakeholders each.

Additionally, it was agreed by 1 stakeholder that CMLs had exceeded expectations on financial savings; increased opening hours, visitor counts and book issues; and that **user satisfaction was in some instances higher than local authority run libraries, due to the dedication of the volunteers**.

10.4 Service Delivery

In terms of **CMLs delivering services more effectively** than previous local authority run models, **perceptions varied amongst the 9 stakeholders**. 3 commented on how **CMLs were much better placed to engage with local communities and tailor their services** to the needs of their individual communities. A further 2 believed that **CMLs were more effective at increasing visitor numbers**. Other effective areas, noted by at least one stakeholder, included how they successfully increased new joiners and book issues; and their provision of jobs clubs, IT sessions, and children's programmes throughout the summer.

'It's around the fact they have been able to engage with their local community. The one example I've got is that when we ran the library, the people living around it, the schools around it, the community groups around it, we struggled to engage with people, as they didn't want to use it. Whereas now, because it's run by them for them, there is more engagement. There's lots of local fundraising. The activities are greater. Schools are engaging with it. And I don't think we could have done that'

'I think one area is where it's a community resource. It's really important for small villages – there is a motivation to keep library because what else is there? The library has a strong presence in the village. Members of the community share their knowledge, playing the cello, creating bunting... the library has a real role to play at the centre of the community and creates community cohesion'

'I know from knowledge of other areas that when a community gets together, the library is better'

These **successes were attributed to community cohesion**; something which several stakeholders felt local authority run libraries were lacking in. However, **3 stakeholders could not identify any areas in which CMLs deliver more effectively than local authority run libraries**. Indeed, 8 stakeholders highlighted examples of CMLs delivering less effectively than local authority run libraries, which were primarily due to factors such as:

- The smaller size of the library;
- Being in close proximity to larger local authority run library;
- Lack of support from the local authority;
- Having little or no responsibility to the local authority; and
- Having a limited range of services.

With regard to the **most successful aspects and benefits of running a CML**, the majority of stakeholders commented on the success of **community cohesion**; 2 of these suggested that this enabled libraries to **tailor services to the needs of individual communities**.

‘Absolutely community value. A sense of community ownership. The fact that they’re able to adapt what they offer for the environment that they’re in. They radically differ depending on what community they’re in. Also they have the ability to react more quickly than a council run library. They buy their stock quicker than we buy our stock. If somebody wants to do something different and want different opening hours they’re able to do it just like that. I think that’s actually a real benefit’

‘CMLs challenge us in a good sense, they’ve taught us more about training and we’ve gone on to adapt training materials from CML training into local authority training. They [CMLs] don’t see the same barriers we do’

‘They tick a lot of government and local government strategy boxes. They definitely have strengthened community resilience, offering job experience opportunities, access to information, and tackling social exclusion.’

A further 5 **stakeholders stressed that simply keeping the library open** and maintaining a service which would not be there had it not been for the community, **was a huge triumph and achievement**. Other less tangible benefits highlighted by 2 stakeholders included how CMLs:

- provide opportunities for volunteering which improve job prospects;
- act as a learning tool for local authorities in some instances;
- address social exclusion and isolation; and
- improve the wellbeing of volunteers

However, 1 stakeholder commented they felt local authorities provided CMLs with much more than they received in return.

10.5 Delivery against the ‘7 Outcomes’

Regarding stakeholder perceptions of CMLs’ ability to deliver against the 7 Outcomes identified in ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England

2016-2021³⁴, the majority **felt that CMLs are particularly effective at delivering against the ‘stronger, more resilient communities’ Outcome**, with all 9 agreeing that they are either ‘very effective’ or ‘quite effective’ at doing so, as illustrated in Chart 15.

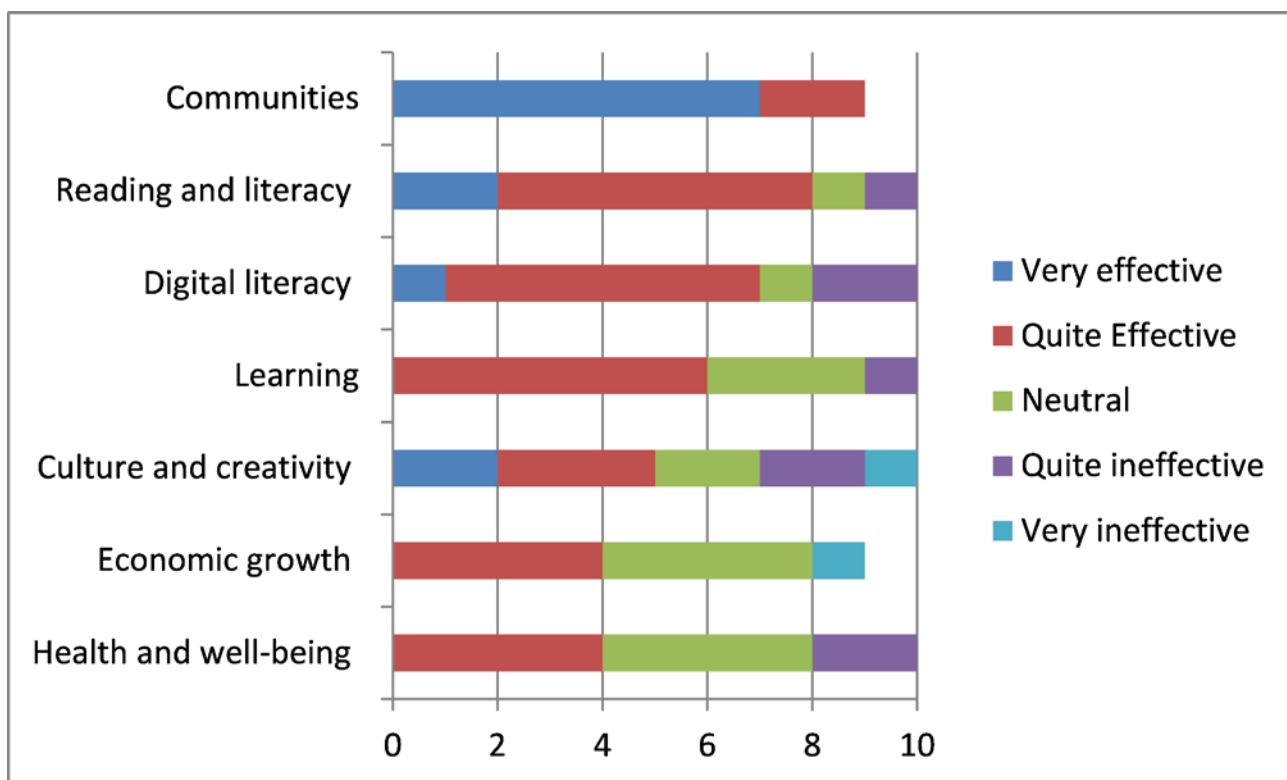
‘Increased reading and literacy’ and ‘improved digital access and literacy’ were also considered outcomes that are delivered relatively effectively, however **some stakeholders compared effectiveness to local authority run libraries, and felt that there was no difference**; and in one instance, this was **considered worse than local authority provision**, where experienced paid staff were seen to be of benefit.

‘I see that as the role of the library. There’s a huge effort in promoting reading, book displays and they’re happy to run literary events and book clubs’

‘Where CMLs receive no support from the council they are quite ineffective because they lack professional advice and expertise’

³⁴ Libraries Taskforce - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>

Chart 15 - Stakeholder Perceptions of CMLs ability to deliver against the '7 Outcomes'^{viii}



Base: N=10, except 'Communities' and 'Economic Growth' where N=9

10.6 Future Direction

In terms of **barriers to growth** for CMLs, **all 9 stakeholders agreed** that the **capacity of communities** and community organisations to run libraries **were limited** by what they could provide. Factors such as drive and determination, and volunteer availability and expertise can drastically affect the success of the library.

Funding was also, perhaps unsurprisingly, **considered a major barrier** to growth for CMLs; 5 stakeholders perceived there to be a lack of funding sources, and that this was partly due to the lack of recognition of CMLs.

Notwithstanding these barriers, **stakeholders identified areas** where local or national **support** could improve the future prospects of CMLs. The majority concluded that there was a requirement to **expand and promote the good practice toolkit and CLs peer network**. In addition, better recognition of these tools would raise the profile of CMLs, thus highlighting the service they provide.

'The desire and appetite of community organisations for this will affect growth. I don't think there's an abundance of organisations out there to take these types of things on'

'The nature of the volunteers they have are quite often very part time. They come in for very few hours and may have limited skills. In order to be able to grow that community library, again we're back to people. And unless you've got the people within that set up who have the expertise and skills to be able to take it further then it's not going to go any further'

4 stakeholders also emphasised the need for more funding opportunities to be made available for CMLs; this could range from minor support in the form of reduced rates or much more substantial grant funding. One stakeholder highlighted how it is easier to bid for funding for activities rather than library services, which would be considered a statutory requirement by some funders.

10.7 Sustainability

Stakeholders held mixed views when comparing the sustainability of CL models as opposed to other library delivery models. **Four stakeholders considered local authority run models as more sustainable** because they have a larger support network; fulfil a statutory requirement that gives them an element of security; and because funding is generally maintained each year for such libraries.

However, a further **two stakeholders believed that CML models were more sustainable** because continuous rounds of budget cuts to local authorities put pressure on library services budgets.

When making comparisons between different CL models, stakeholders outlined a range of **factors which could affect sustainability**. Most notably, 4 stakeholders felt that CL sustainability was dependent on **funding from the local authority**. In addition, it was considered by 3 stakeholders that **access to expertise**, whether in the form of paid staff from the local authority or experienced volunteers, could affect the sustainability of the library.

Support regarding building responsibilities was also felt to be paramount to CL sustainability by two stakeholders. Finally, one stakeholder commented on the importance of **support from the parish council**, and how this has an impact on sustainability.

In terms of stakeholder confidence in CML sustainability, only one felt they were 'very confident', and this was due to the ongoing engagement they had with the CML's business plan. On the contrary, **the majority of stakeholders** (6) believed that **sustainability was dependent on support from the local authority, both financial and in-kind**. One stakeholder also commented on how CMLs often rely on one or two pivotal volunteers to keep the whole service running; if those volunteers are no longer able to stay engaged with the library, sustainability is at risk.

The majority of stakeholders (8) considered **alternative funding sources to local authority provision**, as **'very important' or 'increasingly important'** to the sustainability of CMLs. This was mainly because these funding sources increase the chances for the library to maintain or improve its service. However, they also highlighted that local authorities will be increasingly challenged financially and that a lack of funding from local authorities puts additional pressure on CMLs to fundraise, which can have the effect of taking the focus away from delivering services.

Finally, **all 10 stakeholders** reported that they were **'very comfortable'** with the idea of **income generation or 'enterprising' activities** undertaken within a library context to improve library services and enhance the resilience and sustainability of CMLs. It was felt such activity allows CMLs to expand their service offer, outside of what may be considered traditional services. Other comments suggested volunteers were better at fundraising and maximising income because they have a greater imperative to do so.

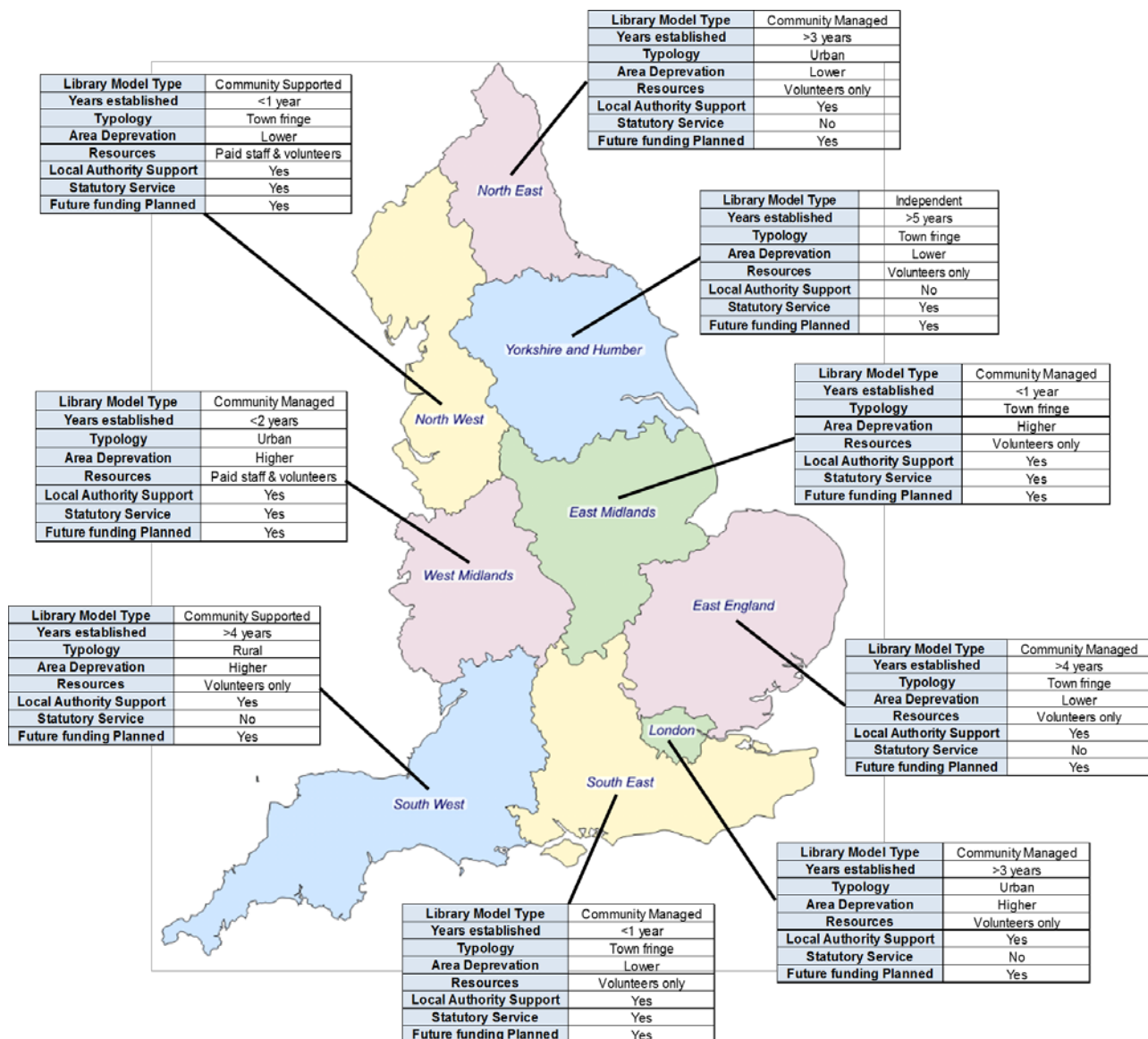
11.0 Community Library Case Studies

9 detailed case studies, one for each of the regions of England, are provided in Annex 3. Each case study was selected based upon a range of typological, geographical, demographic, community library model and age; an overview of which is provided in Chart 16.

The purpose of the case studies is to provide greater depth and understanding about the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of CLs through an open discussion about the specific issues pertinent to each CL featured as a case study. The case studies enable the capture of CL views with regards to the effectiveness of CL services, and assist in triangulating the data captured in other areas of the research in order answer the main research questions.

Developing the case studies involved telephone and in-person interviews with library service managers, staff, volunteers, and other relevant stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews were used to enable an in-depth exploration of topics covered in the baseline survey as well as open discussion regarding the issues pertinent to each respondent.

Chart 16 - Case study location, typology, demographics and library model type
35 & 36



³⁵ (Office for National Statistics - Neighbourhood Statistics, 2017)

³⁶ (Ordnance Survey - Election Maps, 2017)

11.1 Summary of case study findings

The case studies in Annex 3 highlight the variability in how services are provided across different CL models. This variability is the result of a number of factors, including the different library models operated, the financial and physical restrictions associated with the historical context of the community library, and limitations to future growth based on geographical and typological differences. This suggests that the CL sector cannot be fully understood by segregating library types into operational models alone.

Although the case studies showed that CLs share common barriers to growth, such as volunteer availability and capability, funding sources and building restrictions, they also illustrated that CLs are determined to ensure their future sustainability. Despite limitations to their ambitions to grow whilst they remain reliant on some form of centralised support, all of the case studies reported being confident regarding their future.

However, the case studies illustrate that the likelihood of success for sustainably financed and resourced CLs is dependent on a broad set of both internal factors, such as drive, determination, volunteer availability and expertise, as well as external factors such as the impact of local authority policy and resource availability.

CLs demonstrated a desire to be officially recognised, both in terms of national statistics and the local authority library service, for the role they play in delivering library services to local communities and their growing importance. They also voice their ambition to be on an equal footing with local authority run libraries on things like sharing learning, resources, services and good practice where relevant.

CLs commonly cited their wish to see greater cohesion and learning developed between themselves through a nationwide peer support group, that, separate to engagement with local authorities, aimed to share learning and good practice across specific issues that they face.

12.0 Financial Sustainability Analysis

As part of the research, libraries responding to the online baseline survey were asked to provide basic income and expenditure data for their libraries for the latest full financial year. An income and expenditure analysis was performed on data received from survey respondents (see section 12.1)

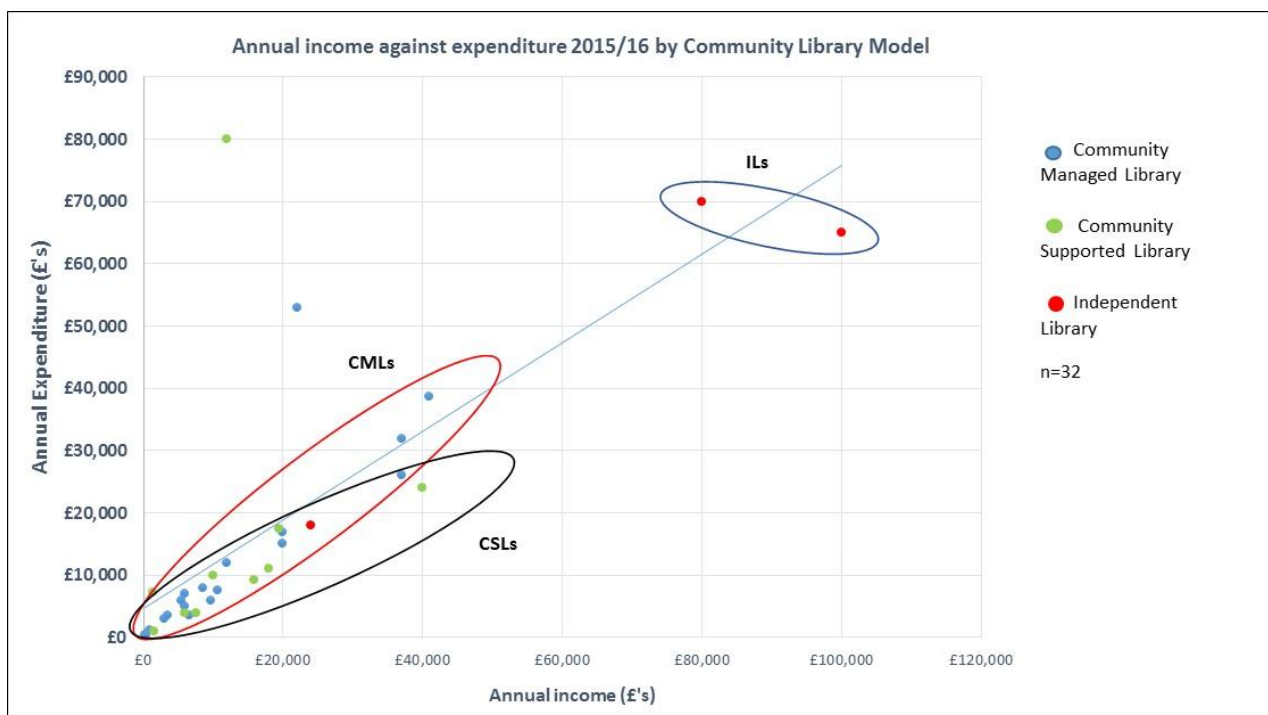
CLs responding to the online baseline survey were also asked for consent to be contacted regarding collecting more detailed financial information. A small sample of the CLs who gave consent provided additional financial information for (up to) the previous three years, or from the first full financial year of trading, to assess their financial sustainability over the longer-term (see section 12.2 and 12.3). The small sample analysed included CSL, CML and IL model types. The analysis was performed by assessing CL performance and sustainability through comparison of a number of financial indicators. The financial indicators and results of the analysis are provided in the following sections.

The analysis cannot be considered representative of the CL sector as a whole due to the small sample size. However, it can be taken as indicative of the types of financial issues faced by the sector.

12.1 Online baseline survey – income and expenditure analysis

52% of total respondents (32 libraries) provided financial information. Chart 17 provides an overview of the distribution of income against expenditure for the latest full financial year by community library model type.

Chart 17 - Annual income against expenditure 2015/16 by Community Library Model



Base: 32

There is a **significant gap between the levels of income and expenditure reported by ILs and CMLs and CSLs, with ILs reporting significantly greater income** and expenditure levels on an annual basis. Given the small number of IL respondents in the online baseline survey, it is not possible to draw detailed conclusions for this difference. However, analysis of the type and number of services offered by the different library models found that ILs offer twice the number of income generating services of CSLs and one third more enhanced services than CMLs. Although these differences cannot fully account for the gap in revenue generation, it does provide some indication as to the approach ILs take to increase revenue streams. However, to truly **understand these differences, it is recommended that further research is undertaken to investigate IL strategies for income generation and operational expense control.**

There is greater correlation between CMLs and CSLs, with income and expenditure levels being broadly similar. However, as income levels grow within CMLs, expenditure levels exceed that of comparable CSLs. This is potentially a factor of lower overhead expenses reported by CSLs, which may be a result of financial or overhead support for buildings owned by the local authority.

Except for two libraries, **all CL respondents reported a break even or excess of**

revenue generation over expenditure. Further analysis to explore other factors of financial sustainability such as profitability is not possible from the available data. **However, simple analysis of these results indicates general financial healthiness within the CLs that provided responses to the survey.**

12.2 Community library sample - typology and selection

The small CL sample consisted of one IL, two CSLs and six CMLs. They were selected based on library consent to provide additional financial information and on a suitable mix of typology and model type to provide a cross section of CL operation. The libraries in the sample have been in operation for following number of years:

Model type	Number of years established
CML	<1 year
CSL	<1 year
CML	<1 year
CML	<3 years
CML	>3 years
CML	>3 years
IL	>4 years
CSL	>4 years
CML	>5 years

As in section 4.2, the library models were classified and assessed in line with the definitions in the ‘Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit’.⁵ However it is worth noting operational differences between the two CSL’s sampled. The CSL operating for one year provides, in the main, core services only and is effectively run as a local authority library. The CSL operating for four years however shares some characteristics of a CML, as in addition to providing core services, they also provide a greater number of enhanced and income generating services. This operational difference is notable in the analysis within the following sections. Therefore, for the purposes of distinguishing this CSL, it will be referred to as CSL* for the remainder of the financial sustainability section of this report.

12.3 Longer term financial sustainability analysis of selected sample

12.3.1 Indicator One: Sustainable Growth Rate

Sustainable revenue growth provides an indication of how much additional revenue an organisation can attract according to the resources available within the balance sheet, i.e. the maximum level of revenue that can be generated using the resources available within the organisation.

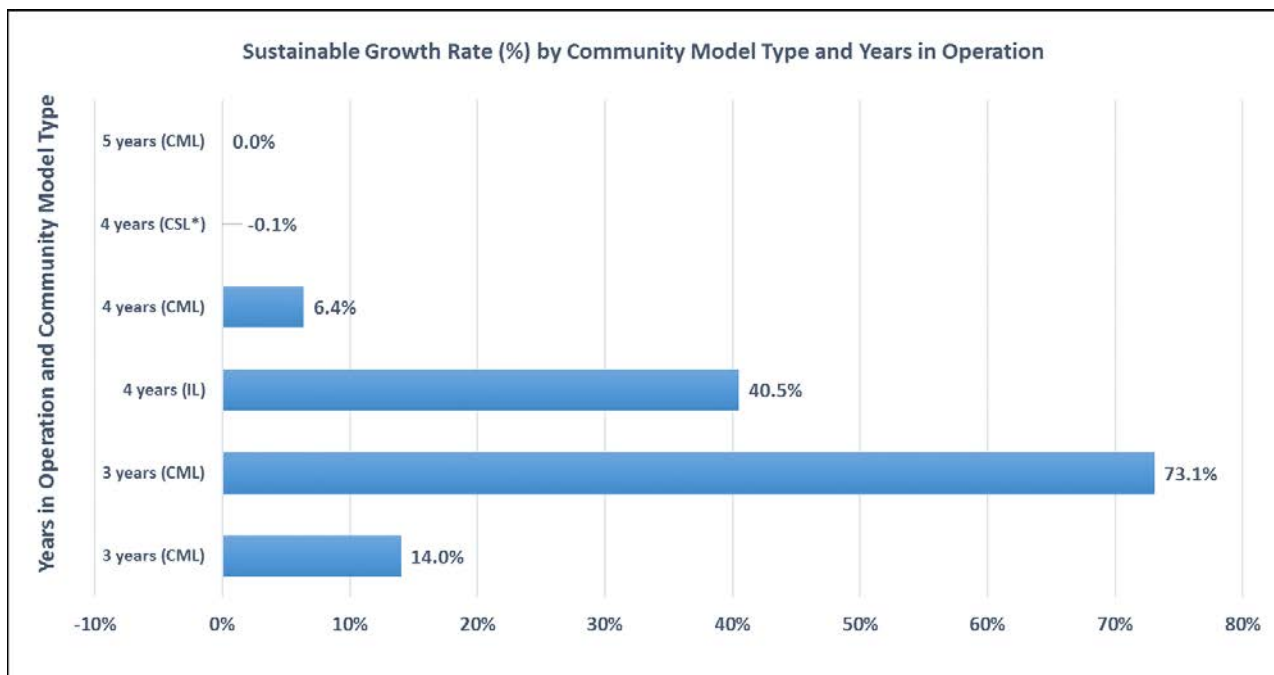
Except for one library, **all CLs analysed indicated a neutral or positive sustainable growth rate**. Chart 18 provides the sustainable growth rates for those libraries sampled. Given the sustainable growth rate indicator is based upon growth trends over time, it was decided that CLs trading for less than one year should be discounted from the analysis to prevent distortion of the results.

Two points can be taken from the sustainable growth rate analysis. First, **there is significant variability between CL model growth rates based upon their number of years in operation**. This variability is **driven by differences in efficiency in generating revenue against available assets, and levels of re-investment into enhanced or income generating services over time**.

CLs operating for 3 years reported having comparatively high levels of growth, indicating the generation of sufficient levels of revenue against the available assets they possess. However, these CLs are re-investing revenues at a smaller scale than CLs who have been in operation for 4 years or more, who despite generating comparable revenue figures are re-investing more into new assets for future revenue generation. Given the small sample size it is not possible to translate these results to the CL sector as a whole. However, the results do provide some indication as to the journey CLs make from start-up to more mature enterprises. Notably, **early stage CLs focus on generating as much revenue as possible to establish themselves and consolidate their financial position**. Once established, and with confidence in the reliability of revenue streams, they begin to re-invest revenues into diversification of services to grow their asset base.

Secondly, when comparing the CML models to the CSL model, the CSL has a neutral growth rate. This could be attributed to the nature of the CSL model, where core funding from the local authority, and subsequent re-investment into diversified services is controlled by the requirements of local authority. However, **CSL's lower but more stable revenues may ensure they benefit, outside of local authority core funding changes, from being insulated from market forces affecting revenues**.

Chart 18 - Sustainable growth rate (%) by community model type and years in operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library

(N=6)

12.3.2 Indicator Two: Pricing Index

Pricing index is a function of dividing total revenue by the cost of goods sold (COGS) i.e. the cost of generating those revenues. When the index increases, so does the gross profit margin generated, and vice versa. Therefore, a higher pricing index indicates a higher gross profit margin and subsequently a better cash flow, which is required for sustainably maintaining business on a day to day basis.

As indicated in Chart 19, all libraries indicated the ability to generate positive or neutral gross profit margins based on their current revenue generating activities. The majority of revenue generation relates to delivery of core library services (see Annex 1 for a list of core and enhanced services). Enhanced services, where provided, were focused on main meeting room hire and running additional clubs/group forums.

The **analysis found no particular feature that accounted for the variability in pricing index recorded between CMLs, CSLs or ILs**, and therefore it is assumed that the ability to generate greater gross profit margins is dependent on the specific set of circumstances of each of the libraries analysed, rather than any correlation or differences between model types. However, **the level of gross profit margin generated by all library models and age groups is positive**. This is encouraging,

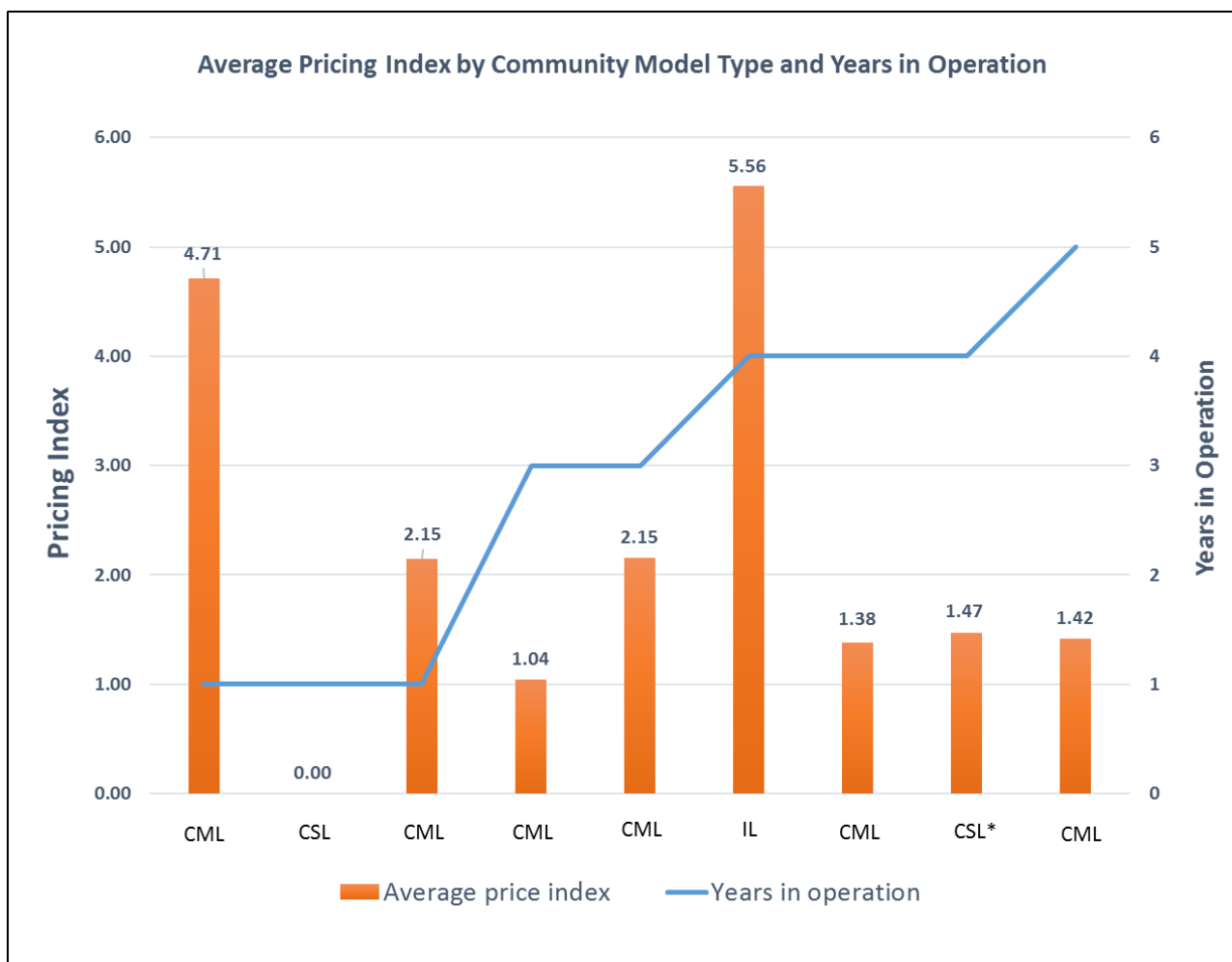
particularly considering this has been achieved by the delivery, in the main, of core services alone.

Significant price indices relate to CL models that offer a greater number of enhanced and income generating services. **Enhanced services have boosted revenue generation for CMLs** and they compare favorably to CSL models that focus on providing core services alone. The one exception is CSL* which, as mentioned previously, shares characteristics with a CML model. The result in Chart 18 provides further evidence of this with CSL* indicating a comparable pricing index with other CMLs analysed.

The results imply that if the CMLs analysed as part of this sample were to continue to develop enhanced services, in addition to maintaining good cost control, their ability to consolidate their future sustainability will be greatly improved. However, to achieve this, factors outside of financial metrics alone need to be considered – things that relate to the CMLs own ambitions and ability to market their enhanced services within their local community.

This entrepreneurial requirement is a point that has been validated by **CMLs** in the case studies, who **identified raising awareness and profile of CML services as an area where greater support, or a better relationship with their local authority to support this entrepreneurial drive, would be beneficial.**

Chart 19 - Average pricing index by community model type and years in operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library
(N=9)

12.3.3 Indicator Three: Operating expense (fixed or overhead cost) ratio

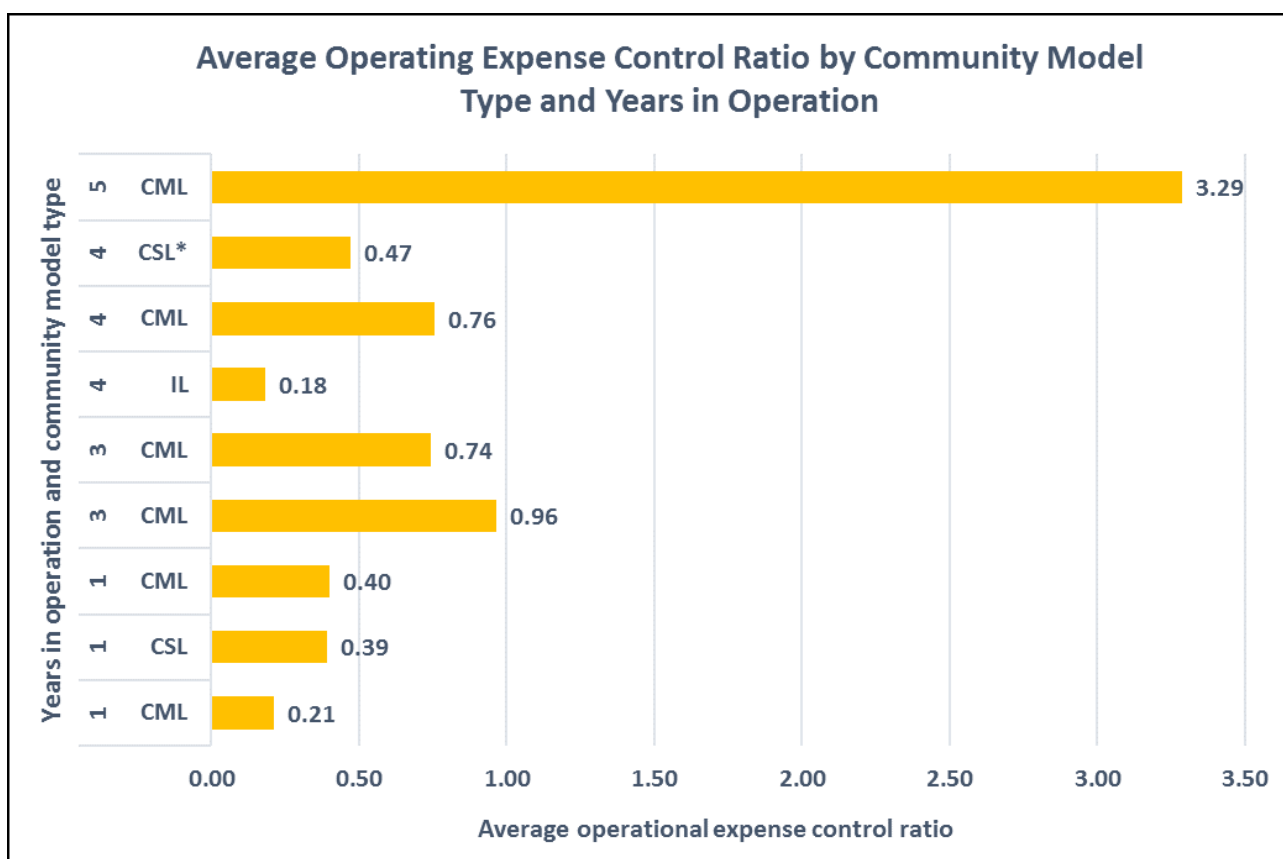
The operating expense ratio is a useful indicator for analysing if an organisation can generate a profit when fixed or overhead costs are considered. A ratio below the value of 1 indicates a greater control over operating expenses.

The level of **operating expense control across all the CL models** analysed is generally **positive**, and **indicates good levels of cost control**. This result may be related to the fact that all the libraries analysed had comparatively low overhead costs when compared to income. Chart 20 provides an overview of operating expense control ratios across the sample set. **Fixed costs such as rent and utilities were generally low** and except for one library, who employed 1 FTE

member of staff, all libraries made sole use of volunteers, eliminating staff cost. Where a paid staff member was used, salary costs were borne by the local authority as part of the CSL model.

The one exception is the CML operating for 5 years, which reported a far higher ratio than the other CLs analysed. This higher ratio represents proportionally greater exposure to overhead expenses against net revenues generated by the library. Subsequently, the ability of this CML to manage their costs through revenues could be more challenging. The impact of this can be seen in other analysis in this report, which indicate proportionately lower gross and net profit margins of this CML when compared to others. This also suggests that this CML is more exposed to full economic costs than other CMLs or CSLs. It is not possible to say why this may be the case, but may be attributable to the specific circumstances of this CML.

Chart 20 - Average operating expense control ratio against Community Library model and Years in Operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library

(N=9)

CLs that have been in operation for 3 years or more generally exhibited higher

ratios. As per section 12.3.2, this **relates to the number of enhanced services offered**, with each incurring additional overhead expenses associated with maintaining new assets. However, these libraries **still indicate good cost control, which is a positive indicator for longer term sustainability** when considered alongside the libraries ability to generate sufficient gross profit margins as discussed in section 12.3.4.

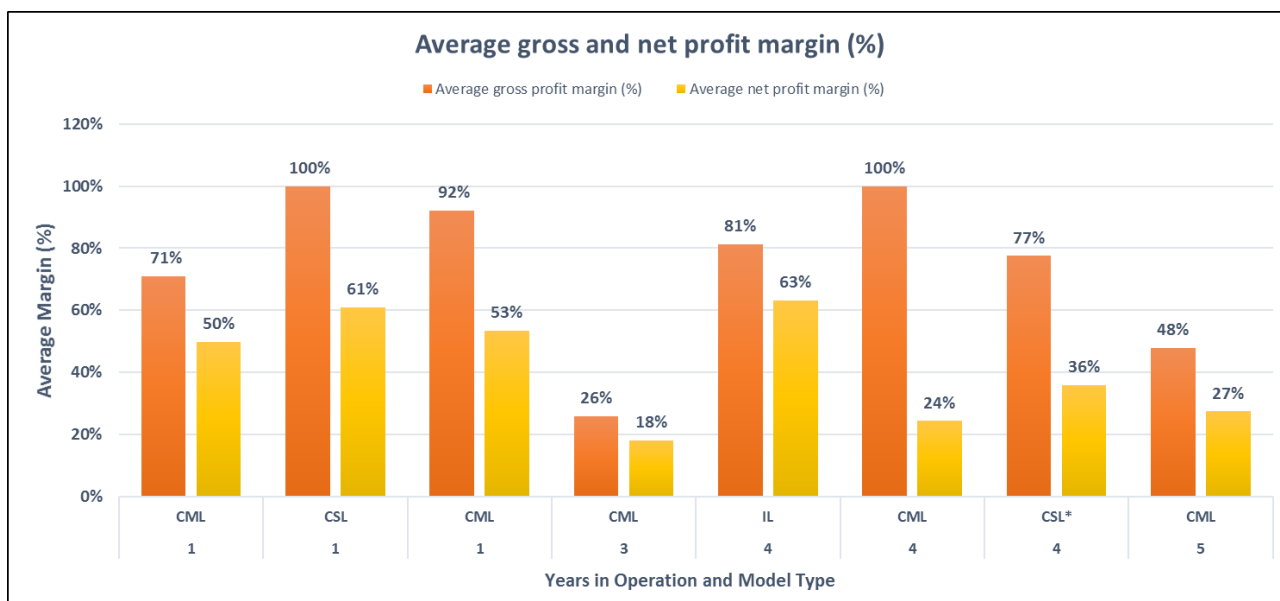
12.3.4 Indicator Four: Gross and net profit margins

Gross and net profit margins indicators assess financial health by revealing the proportion of money remaining from revenues after accounting for the cost of goods sold (COGS) and overhead expenses, i.e. how much of each pound earned is translated into net profits.

As indicated in Chart 21, gross profit margins across the majority of CL models were proportionately high, indicating good financial health. However, **despite high margin values, the actual value of revenue the CLs generate is relatively low in real terms.** In addition, the low cost of goods and overheads CLs reported leads to higher net profit margins, as a greater proportion of income is translated directly into profit. The high conversion rate of revenue to net profit is increased, as all CLs reported they pay no tax and, except for one library, only make use of volunteers which eliminates salary costs.

Therefore, **CLs are highly sensitive to factors affecting gross and net profit margin**, e.g. increasing overhead costs through rent or utility bill rises. Given the relatively small value these margins represent in real terms, **small changes to overheads or income can have proportionately significant impact**, risking longer term sustainability.

Chart 21 - Average Gross and Net Profit Margin (%) by Community Library Model Type and Years in Operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library

(N=8)

Differences among CL models are between CMLs in operation for 3 years or more offering enhanced services, and CSLs in operation for 1 year or less offering only core services. Despite gross profit margins being broadly similar across CL models and age range, those **CLs offering enhanced services generated greater revenue in real value terms against those libraries that have not.** This **additional revenue**, combined with good operating expense control, is **re-invested to support the libraries future sustainability** and mitigate gross and net margin sensitivity.

The overhead expense rate of the two CSLs sampled is relatively similar, with an overhead cost of approximately 40% of total revenue in both cases. However, in comparison, the overhead rate for CMLs is much more varied, with overheads as a proportion of overall revenues ranging from 18% to 75%. The overhead rate is important when considering net profit margin, as it directly impacts the profit a library can generate after the costs of goods sold is accounted for.

The **steady overhead rate of CSLs** could be considered a feature of their model, with core funding for the delivery of services being provided by the local authority. This **provides a stable base** from which to operate, **but reduces the opportunity for CSLs to grow, as profits are re-directed back into running core services**, rather than developing enhanced or additional income generating services.

In contrast, the **variability of overhead costs in CMLs** indicates varying degrees of

ability by CMLs to manage or influence their operating expenses. This is **highly influenced by the set of specific circumstances that affects each individual CML**. Contributory factors range from physical building restrictions to the transition arrangements experienced by the CML when moving from local authority led library provision.

Therefore, the **ability for CMLs to grow sustainably is not only reliant on the level of revenue the library can generate**. In the case of the CMLs sampled, despite positive performance, additional less tangible factors are likely to play a significant part in their ability to expand and/or consolidate their future financial sustainability.

12.3.5 Indicator Five: Net Cash Flow

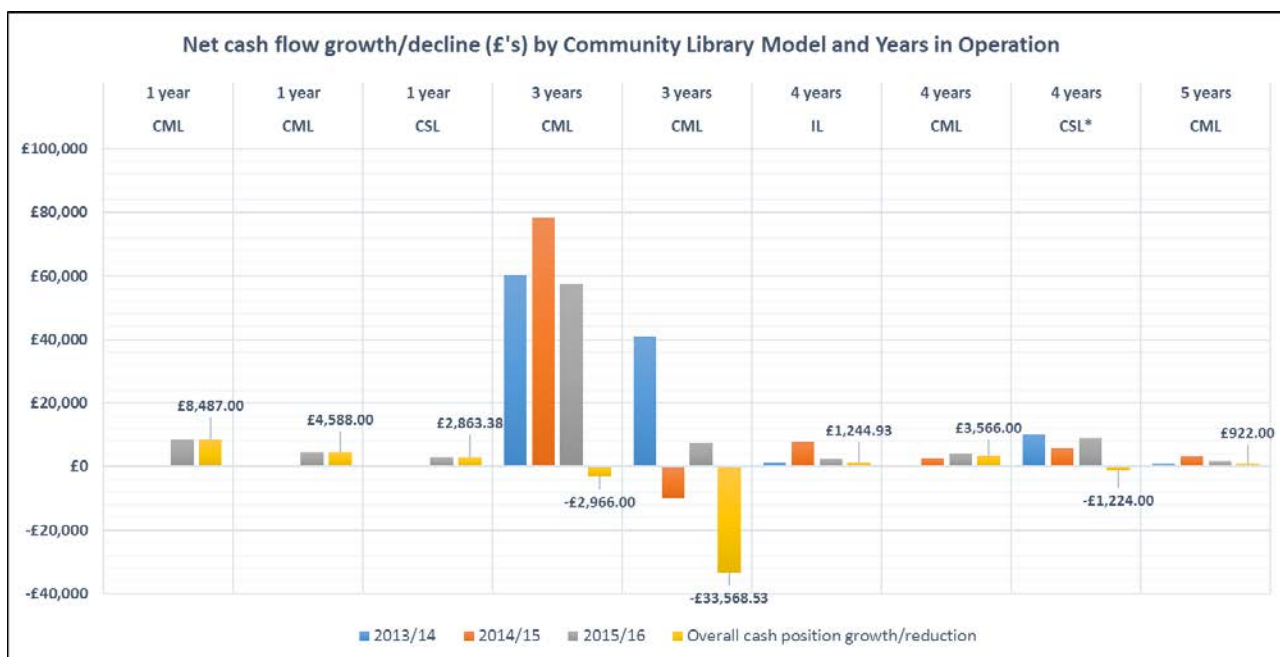
Net cash flow refers to the difference between cash inflows and outflows in a given period, and provides an indication of an organisations ability to maintain liquid assets to service regular, day-to-day, trading.

As indicated in Chart 22 all but one of **the CLs analysed indicated successive positive year-end cash reserves** for the financial periods they reported against, i.e. cash left in the bank after cost of goods, overhead and re-investment expenses had been accounted for. However, two CMLs and CSL* indicated a net reduction in cash reserves over time. From the data provided, it is not possible to comment as to why net cash reserves reduced specifically in the case of these libraries. However, given year end cash reserves remain generally positive over the time periods they reported, it could be assumed this is a result of general cash flow fluctuations, rather than issues with cash flow management.

CLs in operation for one year or less also reported positive year-end cash reserves. Given their short period of operation and starting from a nil or minimal cash position, this result could be considered as encouraging for their future sustainability.

Considering the two CMLs and CSL* mentioned previously, the remaining CLs indicated a stable or increasing net cash flow position. Where cash flow reserves varied in CLs that have been in operation for three years or more relates directly to their level of re-investment into enhanced services. This difference marks a change in confidence levels to re-invest when comparing CLs operating for longer periods to those that have been created within the past year. Overall, the reported **cash flow reserves indicate that the CLs analysed are highly capable of servicing regular, day to day, trading**.

Chart 22 - Net cash flow growth/decline (£'s) by Community Library Model and Years in Operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library

(N=9)

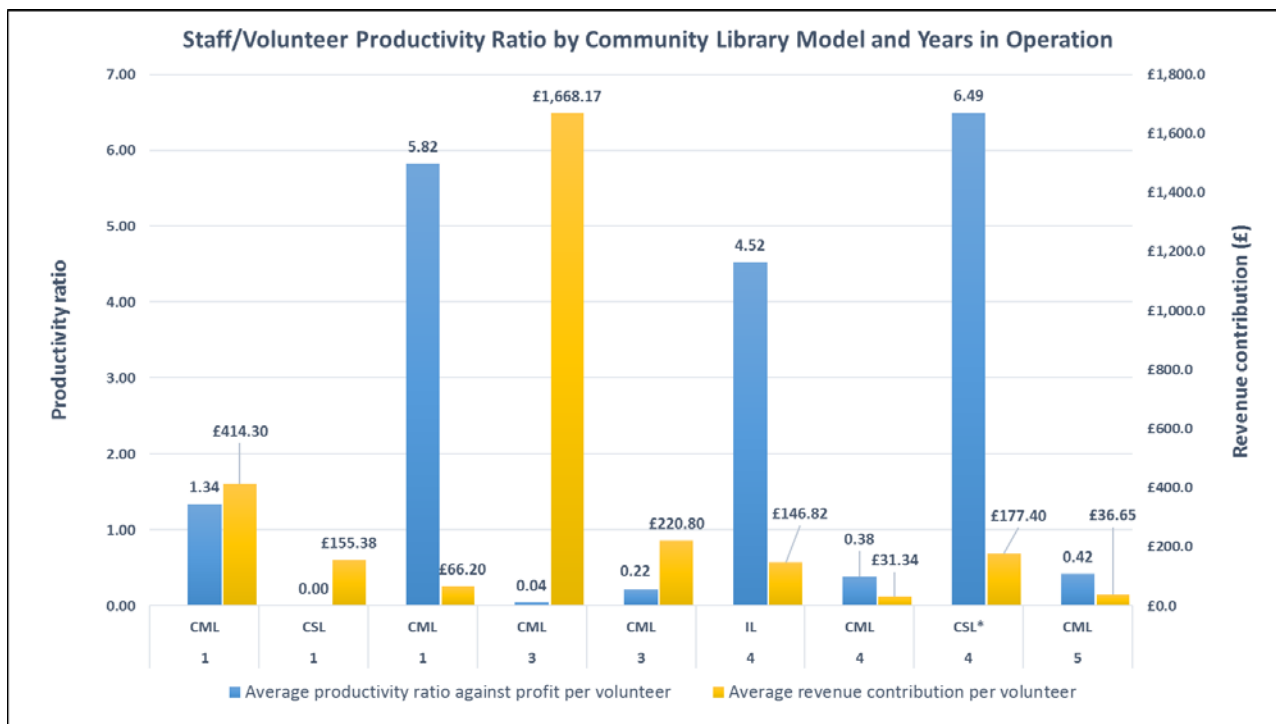
12.3.6 Indicator Six: Staff/Volunteer Productivity

Employee productivity (sometimes referred to as workforce productivity) is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. Productivity is evaluated in terms of the output per employee and provides an indication of the efficiency of workers to generate profit for the organisation. In the case of CLs, this refers to the financial value each volunteer generates for the CL based on overall profits generated, i.e. the profit remaining after total revenue minus the cost of goods sold and overheads are accounted for. The productivity ratio is a function of overhead expense and profit generated, i.e. the cost associated with staffing and running of the library against the profit generated, and can be thought of as a multiplier of additional value created by each volunteer for each pound invested, e.g. a productivity ratio result of 1.50, indicates that for each pound invested in the running of the library and its volunteers, fifty pence is created in terms of profit.

As can be seen from Chart 23, there is **significant variation across the different CL models with regards to productivity ratio and average profit contribution by volunteers**. There is no apparent correlation between CL model type and productivity levels, however, certain CLs have highly productive volunteers, the highest raising £6.49 of profit for every £1 invested^{ix}.

Except for one CSL, who reported they had no overhead costs due to core funding from their local authority, **all CLs demonstrated that volunteer productivity and contribution to overall profit is positive.** This highlights the importance of **attracting and maintaining volunteer numbers and efficiency** to maintain sustainability. This is echoed in the case studies, where CLs expressed the importance of volunteers. Of note is the baseline survey analysis which cited the **availability of volunteers as the greatest barrier to the continued operation of CLs.** Combined with their importance for generating revenue and subsequently profit, it is **suggested that further research is undertaken regarding volunteer recruitment, satisfaction and retention.**

Chart 23 - Staff/Volunteer Productivity Ratio by Community Library Model and Years in Operation



CML: Community Managed Library CSL: Community Supported Library IL: Independent Library

(N=9)

12.3.7 Concluding points

Overall, the **financial sustainability analysis indicates generally positive growth** of the CLs sampled. However, all of the library models demonstrate a **high dependency on volunteer performance and availability, and a high level of sensitivity to additional financial burden**, such as increasing overhead costs. Therefore, **local authorities should be encouraged to continue ‘non-financial’ and ‘provision of expertise’ support to CLs**, where feasible and relevant. This will support CLs in the short to medium term period (Years 1 to 3) of consolidation required to ensure their sustainable development. It is also **recommended that further information and support is provided to CLs to identify, prepare and apply for local and national grant funding sources**. This information and support could be provided through the ‘Libraries shaping the future: good practice toolkit’⁹, the ‘Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit’⁵, the ‘Community Peer Library Network’⁷ or by local authorities assisting CLs by providing access to information and training.

13.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The research presented within this report was limited to the number and typology of CLs that responded to the initial online survey, and subsequently provided consent to be contacted for further investigation. Therefore, the information collected cannot be considered a representative sample of the community library sector as a whole. Subsequently, any conclusions and recommendations are indicative only, however a number of clear messages emerged from the findings.

13.1 Position and role of community libraries

At the initial stages of this research, a **desk based review of available information** regarding community libraries within existing literature, specifically concerning their effectiveness and sustainability, **was found to be limited**. The review found only a small number of research papers and generalist reviews regarding community library development, key features and services.

This lack of existing literature could be attributed to the relatively recent, i.e. within the last four to five years, focus on CLs being considered as a viable alternative for local authorities who face ongoing resource constraints in managing their local statutory library services. That being said, CLs are not a recent phenomenon and have been in existence in various forms for some time. However, the focus on their ability to provide effective and sustainable services to the public has intensified with the general consensus that the use of CL models will grow in the coming years as local authority budgets continue to come under pressure. This fact is echoed in the stakeholder analysis where just under half of the stakeholders interviewed indicated that they were considering future plans to grow the number of CMLs in their local authority area.

Learning from existing literature consistently **points towards the requirement for greater communication**, understanding and strengthening of formal or informal links **between local authorities and CLs**.

Increased communication is cited as important to improving and expanding service provision, supporting skills development within staff and volunteers, and exploring the sharing of common resources, services and good practice. Certainly, these aims are echoed within the research by an overall desire from CLs to engage on a more frequent and formal basis with local authorities.

CLs also voiced their ambition for their libraries to be on an equal footing with local authority run libraries on things like sharing learning, resources, services and good practice where relevant. One aspect of this ambition was the desire by CLs to be

officially recognised, both in terms of national statistics and the local authority library service, for the role they play in delivering library services to local communities and their growing importance.

CLs also cited their wish to see greater cohesion and learning developed between themselves through a nationwide peer support group, that, separate to engagement with local authorities, aimed to share learning and good practice across specific issues that they face. CLs felt that, even with the range of different operational models, there are common challenges that CLs face which would benefit from such a peer network. Stakeholders interviewed echoed this ambition, with the majority indicating that there was an urgent requirement to expand and promote the existing good practice toolkit and peer network.

This promotion could also provide a valuable opportunity to gather views from local authority staff directly involved in delivering library services on the barriers that they face in engaging with CLs.

13.2 Potential barriers

Several potential barriers to CL effectiveness and sustainability were identified. First, despite areas of commonality across the CSL and CML models, there is a **great deal of variability in how services are provided**. This variability is the result of a number of factors, including the different library models operated, the financial and physical restrictions associated with the historical context of the community library, and limitations to future growth based on geographical and typological differences across the 9 regions of England.

This theme of variability is borne out throughout the research and is evidenced within the online baseline survey, case studies, stakeholder interviews and financial sustainability analysis.

It is reasonable to say that the CL sector cannot be fully understood by segregating library types into operational models alone. The likelihood of success for sustainably financed and resourced CLs is dependent on a broad set of both internal factors, such as drive, determination, volunteer availability and expertise and external factors such as the impact of local authority policy and resource availability.

As has been highlighted, what could be considered as **typologically similar CLs operating within comparable local areas, demonstrate significantly different attributes** in terms of their operation and potential to grow sustainably.

Second, the online baseline survey and subsequent case study interviews identified

volunteer availability and capability as a key barrier to their future sustainability. This specifically related to the challenge of managing the varying frequency and skills sets associated with the volunteer time that is offered to community libraries, i.e. ensuring sufficient and suitably trained volunteers are available to ensure efficient running of the library.

CLs reported that **managing volunteer availability was challenging**, as they recognised and appreciated any time a volunteer can provide is valuable. Subsequently they are reticent to impose set timetables for volunteering time, or increase the training burden. This friction between ensuring sufficient volunteer time and skillsets against effectively managing the delivery of library services is further emphasised when taking into consideration that volunteers represent a critical resource for revenue generation, as identified in the financial sustainability analysis.

Some CLs have dealt with this friction by providing diversified and interesting/fun activities that volunteers can support, without the need for additional training above that of a basic nature. The cost of providing these additional activities are mitigated further by sharing financial risk with third parties who wish to use the library space. This approach has the effect of providing additional income, minimising training 'burden' on volunteers and providing a different set of activities that have the potential to attract a different demographic of volunteers, e.g. younger age groups. This is particularly important as many CLs reported their volunteer base to be predominantly 60+ years old, with limited involvement of volunteers from younger age groups. Despite many CLs reporting that volunteer numbers have remained the same or grown slightly in the past three years, **the issue of longer term volunteer availability raised concerns with CLs**, who identified the potential gap in volunteer availability becoming greater as older volunteers reduced or ceased providing their time.

Finally, **availability of funding and building restrictions are key barriers to CLs.** Tackling these barriers is likely to be challenging given that any solutions will be limited by external factors, such as the availability of localised funding and the physical building constraints that libraries operate from.

These barriers have been mitigated relatively successfully where ongoing support has been provided by local authorities, often on a small scale, or ad-hoc basis. Examples include preferential lease or rental rates, or discounted/free access to central library systems. This has enabled community libraries a window of opportunity to consolidate their volunteer base, ensure effective service delivery and, in the case of CMLs, develop enhanced or income generating services which have contributed to their long-term sustainability.

Interestingly, stakeholders also emphasised this approach, highlighting the need for more funding opportunities to be made available for CMLs; ranging from minor support in the form of reduced business rates or much more substantial grant funding.

13.3 Effectiveness and sustainability

CSLs and CMLs deliver the majority of the core services provided by equivalent local authority run libraries. A large proportion of CMLs also provide a greater range of enhanced services, which are reasonably easy to provide within the CMLs financial and resource limitations e.g. providing meeting room hire and various group or club events.

The **majority of CSLs and CMLs** also reported that they **intend to grow the number and scale of these enhanced services in the future**, indicating a desire to increase revenues and support sustainable growth for the future. This motivation is shared with the majority of stakeholders who consider alternative funding sources to local authority provision, as 'very important' or 'increasingly important' to the sustainability of CLs.

However, these same CLs indicated that their core revenue streams will still be primarily sourced from the delivery of core services, indicating **limitations to their ambitions to grow whilst they remain reliant on some form of centralised funding or support**. Therefore, a question remains regarding the timeframe required before CLs become financially sustainable without reliance on core support structures.

As shown by the analysis in section 12.0, the **sustainable growth experienced by the CLs should be considered fragile** based upon the various financial indicators investigated. Despite all CL models indicating generally positive growth and the ambition to establish the library for the longer term, they indicate a **high dependency on volunteer performance and availability**, in addition to a level of **sensitivity to additional financial burden**, i.e. increases in the cost of goods sold or overhead expenses.

Excluding ILs, both **CSLs and CMLs are broadly similar in terms of financial and resource sustainability**. However, CMLs tend to provide a greater range of enhanced, or income generating services and demonstrate greater ambition in terms of the services they wish to provide. CMLs are in financial terms, broadly comparable with CSLs in terms of their stage of development and need support to consolidate their financial position in the short to medium term (Years 1 to 3). **All CLs reported** that they felt they were **delivering efficient and effective**

services for the majority of those that they offer, a view that was **confirmed by the user survey**. **Stakeholders** also supported this view, with most indicating they **felt that CLs had exceeded expectations on specific outputs** such as financial savings; increased opening hours, visitor counts and book issues; and that user satisfaction was in some instances higher than local authority run libraries, due to the dedication of the volunteers and greater engagement with their communities.

13.4 Stakeholder perceptions

Stakeholders interviewed as part of the research were generally positive about CLs and their ability to deliver library services, whether that be CML or CSL models (stakeholders did not comment on ILs). When asked if they felt CLs were effective in delivering the 7 Outcomes as described in ‘Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021’³⁷, the majority felt that CLs were ‘quite’ or ‘very effective’ in delivering 4 of the 7 Outcomes (‘increased reading and literacy’, ‘stronger, more resilient communities’, ‘cultural and creative enrichment’ and ‘increased digital access and literacy’).

However, stakeholders felt CLs were less effective in delivering the other 3 Outcomes (‘healthier and happier lives’, ‘greater prosperity’ and ‘helping everyone achieve their full potential’).

Although there were no clear arguments provided as to why stakeholders felt this, some reasons cited related to restrictions regarding the CLs buildings or available expertise to effectively deliver these outcomes. Stakeholders did not provide any evidence as to whether their opinion of CL effectiveness against the 7 Outcomes had improved or declined over time. This may be due to the limited timescales that some CLs had been in operation, and the depth of knowledge and engagement some stakeholders had with regards to the CLs they engaged with.

When moving to a CL delivery model, the majority of **stakeholders** reported they had set expectations for CL performance, and most **felt that the libraries had either met or exceeded these expectations**, commenting that **CLs had maintained quality** levels and **increased social capital** in the local area. However, a small minority of stakeholders reported that in some cases their expectations were set low to begin with, raising the question as to whether the performance of community libraries is being considered by stakeholders on an equal basis with local authority led libraries.

A point of interest is that some **stakeholders reported** that they felt **that CLs** were

³⁷ Libraries Taskforce (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-deliver-ambition-for-public-libraries-in-england-2016-to-2021>)

better placed to engage and tailor services to local communities than themselves. This was attributed to CLs generating greater community cohesion; something which several stakeholders felt local authority run libraries were lacking in. Stakeholders also reported that some CLs have exceeded local authorities expectations in increasing the number of library joiners, book lending, running clubs, children's programmes and IT provision. This point reinforces the opportunity for greater communication regarding good practice between stakeholders and CLs.

However, **stakeholders** did indicate that they **saw limiting factors** that would **affect CLs** going forward. These factors were their **size, proximity to local authority led libraries, a lack of ongoing local authority support** and a **limited range of services** they can offer. These limiting factors correlate with views voiced by CLs who took part in the research.

However, **3 stakeholders** confirmed that existing **support would probably continue** for the foreseeable future; and **all stakeholders** reported that they **were 'very comfortable' with the idea of income generation** or 'enterprising' activities undertaken within a library context **to improve library services** and enhance the resilience and sustainability of CLs.

13.5 Recommendations and areas of further support

Throughout the research, key findings have been developed to provide recommendations that address specific issues for the CL sector. These recommendations take the form of areas of further support/development for the CL sector and areas of further research, where gaps in data or understanding were identified. These recommendations are summarised in the following sections.

13.5.1 Recommended areas of support for community libraries

Due to the variable nature of the CL models, it is challenging to recommend a set of support mechanisms that will address all the issues that CLs face. However, the research did provide 6 clearly identifiable themes of support that CLs and local authorities can benefit from in the short to medium term:

1. Consistently throughout the research, the theme of increased communication and sharing of good practice and learning between local authorities and CLs was cited by both CLs and stakeholders as a key area of continued support. Of note was CLs desire to change the nature of the relationship, to that of both groups working on a more equal basis; with greater recognition of the role that CLs play.

Recommendation

It is recommended that ongoing engagement between local authorities and CLs is encouraged. This could be supported by the increased promotion of existing support materials, such as the 'Stronger co-ordination and partnership working' section of 'Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016-2021'³, by the Local Government Association (LGA) to its members, and by existing CL peer networks, i.e. 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹.

2. CLs are also treated differently by local authorities across England, with some CLs being part of the statutory service and other CLs not being aware if they are part of the statutory service or not. Increased clarity of communications at a local level between CLs and local authorities could be supported by additional national guidance for local authorities on when to view CLs as potentially providing a statutory service. It could also provide example service level agreements (SLA's) or memorandum of understanding (MoU's) for local authorities to use in setting out clear expectations for delivery by existing and new CLs. This guidance should be provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and consideration should be given about whether it could take a similar format as that produced by the Welsh Government in their publication "Guidance on Community

Recommendation

It is recommended that additional national guidance for local authorities is provided by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This guidance should set out when a CL should, or should not, be viewed as potentially providing a statutory service and also provide examples of SLA’s and/or MoU’s templates that can be used by local authorities to set out expectations for CL delivery of services. This guidance could take the form as that produced by the Welsh Government in their publication “Guidance on Community Managed Libraries and the Statutory Provision of Public Library Services in Wales”³⁸

3. CLs consistently identified limited sources of funding and building restrictions as key barriers. Tackling these barriers is challenging given that solutions are limited by external factors, such as the availability of localised funding and the physical building constraints that libraries operate within. Income generation activities are critical to CLs long-term sustainability, allied with ongoing support from local authorities, for example, through contributions to core funding (especially in the early years), free/discounted access to library management systems and IT, and reduced business rates and preferential lease rates. Both CLs and local authorities recognise there is a need for more funding opportunities to be made available for CLs, ranging from minor support to more substantial grant funding.

Recommendation

It is recommended that further information and support is provided to CLs to identify, prepare and apply for local and national grant funding sources. This information and support could be provided through ‘Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit’⁵, the ‘Community Peer Library Network’⁹ or by local authorities assisting CLs by providing access to information and training, ensuring that CLs are able to benefit from any funding streams that become available.

4. A regular theme identified by CLs is the value of ongoing ad-hoc or targeted support from local authorities that does not necessarily relate to direct funding, for

³⁸ GOV.WALES (2017) [online] <http://gov.wales/docs/drah/publications/150522community-managed-libraries-en.pdf>

example, informal advice, support with accessing local volunteer networks, and combined training sessions. This support has enabled CLs a window of opportunity to consolidate their volunteer base, ensure effective service delivery and, in particularly in the case of CMLs, develop new enhanced or income generating services that have contributed to their long-term sustainability

Recommendation

Local authorities should be encouraged to provide on-going 'non-financial' and 'provision of expertise' support to CLs, such as informal advice, or free/discounted access to library management systems and IT, combined training sessions or preferential lease rates. This continuing support is particularly valuable to CLs in the short to medium term period (Years 1 to 3) of consolidation required to ensure their sustainable development.

5. Current CL library models demonstrate a high dependency on volunteer performance and availability, and a high level of sensitivity to additional financial burden, such as increasing overhead costs. The dependency on volunteers is particularly important, with CLs citing volunteer availability and capability as a key barrier. Volunteers represent a critical resource for revenue generation and future development, however CLs raised concerns regarding the gap in volunteer availability becoming greater as the number of older volunteers providing their time reduced or ceased.

Recommendation

It is recommended that additional information and support on how to increase volunteer recruitment and improve succession planning and retention is provided by local authorities and national organisations (such as the Taskforce and peer support networks) to CLs. This could include increasing connections with national partners such as the National Citizen Service (NCS), or exploring corporate volunteering opportunities. Learning and good practice developed through this support, and areas of further research into how to attract and retain volunteers of all ages with the right skills (as outlined in point 1 of section 13.5.2), should be incorporated into the 'Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit'⁵ and receive additional promotion by CL peer networks, such as 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹

6. CLs cited their wish to see increased cohesion and learning developed through a nationwide peer support group that, separate to engagement with their local library service, shared learning and good practice across specific issues that CLs face; a view that was echoed by stakeholders interviewed. The shared learning and knowledge created by stronger networking would encourage self-ownership by CLs of the challenges within the sector, and provide a route for local authorities to engage with CLs in a different manner. Peer networking could therefore play a more prominent role in catalysing development and enhancing the communication process between CLs, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the public profile of existing networks, such as the Community Knowledge Hub⁸ and 'Community Peer Library Network'⁹, are supported, developed and promoted for further dissemination by the Taskforce and its members (particularly the LGA) to relevant stakeholders, local authorities and CLs.

13.5.2 Recommended areas of further research

Following on from the themes identified by the research, a number of additional areas have been identified that would warrant further investigation – either because insufficient information was available, or specific areas of enquiry fell outside the scope of this piece of work.

1. First, the availability and capability of volunteers within the community library sector was consistently identified as a key factor for the future sustainability of community libraries. Therefore, going beyond the recommendation regarding increasing volunteer recruitment and succession planning, **further research is required to fully understand the main drivers and barriers in attracting, training, developing and retaining volunteers.** The learning from this further research should then be applied to the ‘Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit’⁵
2. Secondly, due to the limited number of IL respondents, **additional investigation into ILs is required to fully understand their operational models and methods of revenue generation.** Initial insights indicated that the level of revenue and breadth of services ILs offer far exceeds that of both CSLs and CMLs. Therefore, to provide a holistic view of the CL sector, it is recommended that areas of IL good practice are examined and disseminated to CSLs, CMLs and local authority led libraries, through updates to the ‘Community managed libraries: good practice toolkit’⁵ and through the ‘Community Peer Library Network’⁷
3. Finally, the desk-based review of available information regarding community libraries within existing literature, specifically concerning their effectiveness and sustainability, was found to be limited. The review did not conduct an exhaustive search of all available evidence, but rather captured key findings that summarised current levels of understanding. Therefore, **there would be benefit in conducting a wider review of available evidence to inform future research,** based on the findings in this report.

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Annex 1 – List of core, enhanced and income generating library services

List of core library services offered

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Library service for schools including providing book collections or hosting class visits
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access
- Other

List of enhanced library services offered

- Laptop or tablet loan
- Digital skills classes or training
- Business advice
- Health groups, e.g. Macmillan cancer support or dementia/carer's
- Healthy eating / cooking sessions
- Creative groups
- Reading groups
- Parent and baby groups, e.g. rhyme time
- Children and young people's groups, e.g. homework clubs, code clubs, Minecraft
- Job clubs
- Language / conversation classes
- E-book loans
- E-magazines/newspapers
- Local history archive
- Community events
- Toy library
- Other

List of income generating library services offered

- Craft sales
- Café
- Shop

- Vending machines
- Providing sponsorship opportunities
- Selling/providing advertising space
- Parcel collection
- Delivering front desk services for public services (e.g. the local police, parking services)
- Database research
- Document laminating
- Meeting room/work space hire
- Exhibition areas
- Organised trips

Annex 2 - Endnotes

ⁱ Public libraries are a devolved issue in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

ⁱⁱ As the study of community libraries is still relatively new, there is some variation in the particular terminology used. The desk based review sought academic and grey literature using search terms including:

- 'community managed library'
- 'community library'
- 'community run library'
- and other variations (e.g. 'libraries')

Database searches were made in Wiley Online Library and Google Scholar with a (paper and/ or online) publication date up to and including 5 January 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ The income raising services of 'shop', 'café', 'database research', and 'providing advertising space' that were rated as very or quite effective by the highest proportion of libraries are derived from a low base number of responses. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

^{iv} The income-raising services of 'shop', 'café', and 'database research' that libraries were most likely to report that users were very or quite satisfied with are derived from a low base number of responses. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

^v Percentage of CL responses is not available, as response numbers were derived from coded qualitative comments

^{vi} Percentage of CL responses is not available, as response numbers were derived from coded qualitative comments

^{vii} The core and enhanced services of 'local events information', 'creative groups', 'book sales', and 'meeting room hire' that the majority of respondents were 'very satisfied' with are derived from a low base number of responses. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

^{viii} The base for 'Stakeholder Perceptions of CMLs ability to deliver against the '7 Outcomes' is low. Therefore, these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than representative.

^{ix} Comparing average profit contribution per volunteer in Chart 23 indicates a contradictory position, where lower productivity ratio indicates a higher average profit contribution per volunteer overall, and vice versa for the highest productivity ratio. This is explained by the number of volunteers working at the library. In the case of the highest and lowest productive volunteers, the highest productive library has a lower overall profit and number of volunteers, so even though these volunteers are highly productive the proportional value of the overall profit contribution by volunteer is less. In contrast, the lowest productive library has a higher number of volunteers and profit level, so even though volunteers are less productive overall, the proportional value of profit contribution per volunteer overall is greater.

Annex 3 – Case Studies

Case Study 1: Alford Library, East Midlands

Background

Situated in the East Midlands, Alford is a market town within Lincolnshire with a population of 3,459 people. In light of a reduction in funding from central government in December 2013, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) embarked upon a period of budget and services rationalisation, which included the County library service. Consequently, LCC planned closures for thirty out of forty-five libraries in the county.

Finance

LCC offered each of the libraries facing closure funding of £5,167 per year for a period of four years, if appropriate community groups came forward to operate them as community managed libraries (also known as a community hub libraries). In February 2016, Richard Quantrell, a local resident and Chairman of a group of trustees, proposed to keep Alford library running as an incorporated charity under the community managed library interim offer made by LCC. Subsequently, Alford library was re-opened as one of thirty-five community managed libraries in Lincolnshire.^{ix}

Other support

In addition to financial support, LCC agreed to a peppercorn rent for Alford Library for use of the library premises. LCC also provide access to its library stock; Library Management System; seven public computers with associated IT support; and a Library Development Officer who assists with volunteer training and provides general guidance in a specialist capacity. Initially, LCC offered Alford library a ten year lease, under the provision that at any time they could serve 6 months' notice for the library to vacate the premises. However, the library was able to secure grant funding from an alternative source to update the building, and subsequently persuaded LCC to provide a fixed lease for 7 years. The lease not only covers the ground floor rooms of the building which were originally used by the LCC library service, but also the first floor rooms which were previously used by the community dentist.

Relationships with stakeholders

In April 2016, LCC sub-contracted the core provision of local authority and community managed library services to GLL, a charitable sport and leisure social enterprise.^{ix} As a result, most existing local authority library employees, including the Library Development Officers, transferred to employment under GLL. Alford library still maintains a relationship with LCC, both as a tenant, and as recipients of funding and in-kind support. Under the terms of their Service Level Agreement (SLA), provided the

library opens for at least six hours per week, the support received from LCC will continue until February 2020. However, there is still uncertainty about what will happen to Alford Library after the four years of funding from the County Council has ended:

“Lincolnshire County Council may wish to withdraw the peppercorn rent they currently offer us and start charging commercial rates for the use of the building”

(Alford Library representative)

Since the handover of services to GLL from LCC, the relationship that Alford Library has with the library service provider is generally more positive. However, Alford Library has concerns over the ability of GLL to implement meaningful change to the library service due to financial restrictions which are imposed by LCC, i.e.:

“It’s been easier to have a relationship with GLL because they focus solely on the provision of library services, whereas LCC have to concentrate on saving money. So far it’s been quite positive, GLL are interested, attentive, and supportive, but when it comes to provision of IT for library service, they can’t invest in that unless they get funding from LCC. To some extent they can only help us so far because funding still comes from the County Council”

(Alford Library representative)

User profile

As of December 2016, Alford Library had 3,486 members, a level which has remained static since April 2016. It currently serves just under 40% of the 9,000 local residents, which includes the population of Alford and surrounding catchment areas. Most library users are over 50; however it also attracts younger parents and children.

Alford library is considered to be in an area of high deprivation.^{ix} It feels that low house prices attract people to retire in the area and that this is the reason why the majority of users are over 50 and/or retired. Moving forward, it would like to broaden its user base to local residents who do not consider the library as appropriate to their needs.

The library believes that having a wide range of books and flexible opening hours are the most important factors in maintaining user satisfaction. In addition, as Alford is

considered a centre for education in the area, with three large local schools, the library also feels that concentrating on improving the stock of children's books will encourage visits by pupils who regularly come into the town.

Library Volunteers

The number of volunteers based in Alford library has increased from zero to 20 since opening in February 2016. As the majority of volunteers at the library are over 65, the library envisages the turnover of volunteers will increase in coming years due to problems such as ill health. However, it has plans in place for further recruitment, although on a very informal basis. Recruitment is often through word of mouth as it has found advertising to be ineffective in a small town such as Alford.

The library feels that ensuring volunteers feel valued for whatever support they are able to provide is the most important factor in maintaining volunteer satisfaction. The library finds sourcing enough people to cover library opening hours challenging at times, and illness and caregiving duties can limit volunteer availability. The library feels there needs to be a level of empathy and understanding that not all volunteers can give as much as others. It has overcome this challenge by engaging a number of volunteers who are willing to provide support at very short notice, i.e.:

“(We)...value all volunteers for what they are able to give and realise that some will give a lot more than others, but in their minds they are giving as much as they can”

(Alford Library representative)

LCC provides the library with a comprehensive volunteer training package which is delivered in four parts. The first two cover health and safety and safeguarding; and the final two address the Library Management System and library staff duties.

Service Delivery

Currently, Alford Library provides the following services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi

- Computer access
- Local History Archive
- Meeting room hire

Changing the ambience of the library from what was once perceived by it as a “*boring room with fluorescent lighting*” to one which now includes a comfortable adult seating area, fireplace and children’s area is considered by the library as the most successful aspect of its service, i.e.:

“The relaxed environment encourages people to come into the library and stay, rather than simply take a book out and go”

(Alford Library representative)

The library reports that one of the ground floor rooms which previously only housed seven computers has now been equipped to be an Education and Training suite with adjacent disabled and unisex toilets. The library has also installed a fully functioning kitchen to service the meeting rooms and Education and Training suite.

Outside of delivering services, the library believes there are other, less tangible, benefits to providing a community-managed library service. For example, it feels it is a focal point for community cohesion. Having a library situated in the centre of the town attracts people to local shops and other facilities, enabling Alford to maintain its town status rather than become a village.

Plans to improve current service provision include further development of a range of meeting rooms to hire. The library feels that with further austerity measures likely, local authority run services in the town may also cease, which could offer it the opportunity to house those services in the meeting rooms it has developed.

Sustainability

Alford Library receives £5,167 per year from LCC, which is set until February 2020. The library is confident that the Town Council will increasingly provide core funding for it, and perceives alternative sources of income, other than that from LCC, as very important. Since the library opened, the Town Council has provided financial support - £1000 in the first financial year (2015/16) and £2000 in the second (2016/17). It is envisaged that if funding from LCC decreases, this sum will rise to compensate for any disparity, and that this would constitute approximately 50-60% of all income received.

The library also receives considerable income from hiring out meeting rooms, which accounts for approximately 25% of all income. Previously, there were a number of

organisations in the town offering meeting spaces, but this is now reducing and there is considerable unmet demand. Furthermore, Alford Town Council is now holding all of its meetings in the first floor Conference Room the library has created.

Charitable donations form a minority of the library's overall income; this income stream is variable and ranges from small contributions from the public to larger, more substantial sums from trustees. The library notes that it is important for people who donate to see their donation being used for tangible activities, rather than for core running costs. This makes donors feel good and encourages them to donate more in the future.

Alford library is of the opinion that in addition to financial contributions, having an effective volunteer team in place is fundamental to the sustainability of any community-managed library. The library has attracted a strong team of 20 volunteers, which not only includes a chairman, vice chairman and treasurer and secretary, but also a group of volunteers who run the library.

The library now opens for 15 hours per week due to the level of support received by volunteers. This exceeds expectations outlined in its SLA, which stipulates a minimum of 6 opening hours per week. Each volunteer works approximately three shifts per month, with each shift lasting 3 or 4 hours.

The library has mixed views regarding enhancing its sustainability through enterprising activities. The sale of second hand books and meeting room hire is of great importance, but activity which involves volunteers asking for donations or promoting services is not a route it wants to take as it perceives this could make both volunteers and users feel uncomfortable.

Future Direction and Support

Alford Library requires financial support to continue delivering its services. Although the Town Council have agreed to fund it, if and when financial support from LCC ceases, the library would prefer not to be in a position where it is reliant on this one source. However, additional funding from LCC could potentially allow it to go above and beyond the delivery of core services, for example, paying for a regular storyteller to visit the library.

Support to understand fast and slow moving book stock would be a great help to Alford Library in terms of maintaining user levels. The library feels that for local authority run libraries who have professional staff, this knowledge is updated on a day-to-day basis. However, it is difficult for volunteers working for three shifts a month to build up this level of expertise. Discussions with LCC and GLL to provide this information from LCC's Library Management System are currently ongoing.

Alford library would value the support of a networking and education forum for community managed libraries in order to explore library design and share good practice. GLL have already held meetings with Alford and other community managed libraries to ensure they are able to provide an effective service. To date, this has worked well from the perspective of Alford Library; however, to be of any benefit this support needs to continue:

“We did have a get together with different community hubs to talk about library design and I thought that worked fairly well. I’d like to see that continue and develop. One of the big things with community hubs is that everyone is different but we can learn a lot from what others are doing and it provides a good networking and education forum”

(Alford Library representative)

Regardless of threats to funding and volunteer availability, the library believes having a good team of volunteers and ample support from the local community will ensure it will remain open for the foreseeable future.

Case Study 2: Jesmond Library, North East

Background

Based in the North East of England, Jesmond is a residential suburb in Newcastle upon Tyne. Newcastle City Council (NCC) undertook a budget review in 2013, and consequently decided to reduce the number of libraries in the city. Library service provision was assessed, and subsequently Jesmond Library was among a number of libraries the council considered unnecessary to sustain a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. The Friends of Jesmond Library (FOJL) was initially formed to oppose the closure, but also, as a contingency plan, drew up plans to take over the library, if closure went ahead Jesmond Library closed as a local authority run library on 29 July 2013, and was reopened by FOJL as a community-managed library on 21 September 2013.

Finance

Although NCC does not provide the library with any financial support, it owns the library building. Initially, the library had an informal agreement regarding the lease of the premises. However, an official agreement in the form of a 20 year lease with NCC was signed on 1 July 2016. In addition, NCC funded roof repairs before finalising the lease, and local Ward Committees of the Council have provided relatively small one-off grants to FOJL.

Other support

NCC provides a small amount of informal advice, for example regarding building maintenance issues and general library service provision advice. In addition, NCC carries out some maintenance on the building, which FOJL pay for. NCC also provides and maintains the public access computers, which are part of a city wide network called the People's Network. When Jesmond Library first opened, NCC donated the majority of books, furniture and fittings that were then in place at the library. However, NCC has not provided continued access to the Council's Library Management System. As such, FOJL have purchased an independent management system.

Relationships with stakeholders

Although the library does not have any legal obligation to NCC, it does have an informal relationship whereby NCC provides advice regarding building maintenance and general library guidance, which it finds helpful. However, it would appreciate a closer relationship regarding the statutory library service. Jesmond Library is not part of the statutory library network, so feels that its hard work is not recognised when official government statistics are released.

“They have a statutory library network and we’re not part of it, but we would like to have associate status. If the government are collecting statistics on the number of people borrowing books in Newcastle, or anything like that, then our library is always excluded so none of the official information on usage includes our library”

(Jesmond Library representative)

The library would like to change its status with NCC and has requested further discussions with the council. However, it understands that the potential for further library closures may be the priority for NCC at the current time.

User profile

As of 31 March 2016, the library had 2,339 registered users. However, this figure only accounts for registered users borrowing books. It is also heavily used by non-registered users for events and room bookings. The majority of visitors to the library are from the surrounding area, including regular visits from the nearby West Jesmond Primary School. The library also has links with a number of private schools located in Jesmond, including a nursery, preparatory school and specialist school. Moreover, the library attracts a number of students who reside in the area. However, due to universities having their own libraries on campus, this only accounts for a small proportion of users.

Over the last year, the number of users has increased slightly due to the increasing profile of the library. When it originally closed as a local authority run library, residents were unaware that it had been taken over and reopened by the community. Increased advertising, book stock, community events and group activities also encourage more people to visit the library and take out books. The library believes that the greatest factor in maintaining user satisfaction is having a friendly atmosphere, which outweighs any occasional difficulties with operating the technical systems in the library.

“Most people who come into library are aware that we’re being run by volunteers. We have a big notice to say we’re a volunteer run library and I think the users understand that we’re volunteers and they might have to wait longer or sometimes things go wrong, but on the whole they are very appreciative library is still there. Most of them know the place would be closed if it wasn’t for the volunteers”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Library Volunteers

Over the last year, the number of library volunteers based in Jesmond Library has gradually increased from around 60 active volunteers to just under 90. It believes this is due to it creating an enjoyable place to work. Over the coming years the library hopes to slightly increase the number of volunteers through the involvement of more students and a general growth in diversity amongst volunteers. It plans to do this through promoting the library and volunteering opportunities in local school sixth forms, and also through the Volunteer Centre in Newcastle who advertise volunteer opportunities throughout city.

Jesmond Library feels that having a positive, flexible and inclusive attitude towards volunteers, and valuing all levels of contribution, are the most important factors in maintaining volunteer satisfaction.

“At the moment people come in and enjoy it. We appreciate we can’t survive without our volunteers, so we have a positive attitude towards them. If volunteers feel in subsidiary position and are asked to do menial tasks, it’s not the best way to get volunteers to make a contribution. They need to know their full contribution is valued. We’re flexible and make the most of every volunteer’s enthusiasm”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Due to encouraging a flexible system, it does however, find organising volunteer rotas the most demanding element to volunteer management. Although some volunteers cover the same shifts each week, many often volunteer on an ad hoc basis which can lead to last minute appeals for volunteers. However, it has never closed the library due to a lack of volunteers.

Jesmond Library operates a peer to peer training system where volunteers provide a range of training to other volunteers, including health and safety, basic IT, customer care, information and database control, use of internet resources, and training on the library management system.

Library volunteers come from a range of different backgrounds, including former librarians, academics, and council staff who have experience that they can contribute to the volunteer training programme. Going forward, the library would appreciate a better relationship with NCC regarding sharing training opportunities with its volunteers, which they believe could be mutually beneficial.

“The council might be holding training sessions for their own staff and they could tell us and we could send a couple of people along. One feels that these sorts of links could be helpful. It could be helpful the other way too – our events programme is far better than anything going on in the city council libraries, so they might like to know how we do it”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Service Delivery

Currently, Jesmond Library provides the following core services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Library service for schools including hosting class visits
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

The following enhanced services are also provided by the library:

- Health groups, including dementia/carers and wellbeing
- Play Reading, Poetry Appreciation and Photography Groups
- Parent and pre-school age children’s groups e.g. story time, craft activities and a small children’s play area
- Language/ Conversation classes
- Lectures and Discussion Groups
- Occasional Concerts, Performances and Dance

- Local History Archive
- Camera Club
- Drop in IT support
- Craft sales
- Tea and Coffee
- Sales of library-branded items, greetings cards, surplus books etc.
- Meeting room
- Exhibition areas
- Organised trips

The programme of events is considered to be one of the most successful aspects of the services provided in the library, attracting a wide variety of users, of all ages and interests. Besides meetings and events organised by outside organisations (who pay a room hire fee) many of the events are organised by library volunteers. There is no charge for room hire for volunteer-run events, however people attending the event pay a fee of around £2 to £5, or make a donation. If relatively few people attend a volunteer-run event, there is no risk to the organiser, however the library benefits substantially if the event is successful.

“The volunteer who sets up and organises the club has no financial risk because if nobody turned up they wouldn’t be out of pocket. But if they do get lots of people turning up, we get the money but they also get a lot of satisfaction out of it”

(Jesmond Library representative)

In addition to core and enhanced library services, Jesmond Library feels that running a community-managed library strengthens community cohesion and encourages people to become more active in their community.

“A lot of people in the modern age feel helpless and that there are a lot of things being done to them that they can’t do anything about. The fact that the council closed Jesmond Library and now it’s being run by local people helps persuade people to get involved and make things happen”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Jesmond Library would like to have a more formal link to NCC in the future, specifically regarding inter-library loans. This would enable current library users to access books from the central library, yet not be obliged to travel in order to do so. In exchange, the library feels that some of its book stock may be of interest to local libraries elsewhere in the city.

Sustainability

Jesmond Library receives a small amount of in-kind support from NCC in the form of ad-hoc advice on building maintenance issues, general library services and the supply and maintenance of the public access computers. This support has remained constant over the last three years and Jesmond Library does not envisage it changing in the future, although accepts that issues may arise that it is currently unaware of.

The library reports a continuous increase in income from direct trading and retail, albeit by small amounts. This is generally in line with increased usage at the library. Gradual increases in the number of people borrowing books has led to increases in the purchase of other services, such as coffee or using the photocopying facilities.

The library's main regular sources of income are voluntary donations from library users, many of whom have set up monthly or annual Standing Orders, and the community events which it hosts. Income from both Standing Orders and volunteer-run events has gradually increased over the last three years, which it believes is due to the efforts of the local volunteers being better appreciated in the community.

On occasion, the library also makes one-off applications for grant funding, which is used to support particular projects rather than contribute to core running costs. For example, the library has recently been awarded a substantial grant to refurbish the stairs and first floor of the building, so that it can be used for additional public meetings and events. However, it does not consider grant funding to provide a reliable contribution to its ongoing financial sustainability.

Initially the library received several one-off donations, which enabled it to commence operations with appreciable reserve funds, but it was aware that these contributions were not sufficient to make it sustainable in the long term. Although the library does not charge users to borrow books, it now operates a supporters scheme by which regular donations are made to the library by Standing Order. Through increased communication with potential supporters regarding the importance of donations, it has been able to grow subscription income. At present the library has about 150 regular donors, who have provided over £8,000 in 2016/17, compared with Standing Order income of £7,800 in 2015/16.

The library considers that running well-supported community events is fundamental to its financial sustainability. It feels that traditional library services, even when popular with users, tend not to generate substantial income. The library perceives that the combination of library services, friendly volunteers and a busy events calendar encourages people to visit the library and support its running. Consequently, it is very comfortable with the notion of enhancing sustainability through enterprising activity and is open to all opportunities.

“We appear to lend out less books than when the library was run by the council, but in terms of the events programme, the place is enormously more busy than when the library was run by the council. Just in terms of the number of events going on, there is no resemblance”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Future Direction and Support

Jesmond Library is very confident in the future sustainability of the library and that funding will continue. Although its standing order scheme is currently its main source of income, it has been gradually looking at other methods to increase fundraising capabilities, for example, it has now registered on www.justgiving.com and www.easyfundraising.org.uk which will allow people to fundraise on its behalf, e.g. running a marathon.

“We had someone last year who wanted to run a marathon in support of the library, but couldn’t because we weren’t on justgiving.com, so hopefully this will make it easier for us to have special events to raise money for us”

(Jesmond Library representative)

However, securing such income is considered dependent on the continued involvement of volunteers. The library acknowledges that if the number of volunteers falls, it would have a substantial effect on the sustainability of the library. In order to maintain volunteer numbers, the library is continually advertising and promoting itself through word of mouth, emphasising how enjoyable it is for the volunteers.

“I think one of the things that we would try to stress is that volunteers are not doing it through a sense of duty, they enjoy their involvement in the library and it’s very much a social thing. People enjoy meeting others with similar interests, and enjoy chatting to customers and vice versa”

(Jesmond Library representative)

Jesmond Library would like additional support to gain stronger acknowledgment of the role community libraries play and have a recognised place within the local authority library network. It would also appreciate more guidance published on the various software programmes that can be used to enhance income generating activity:

“I think a Which? Magazine for community libraries would be very good so new community libraries could immediately see which packages were good and could have independent advice on which would be appropriate for different circumstances”

(Jesmond Library representative)

It also feels that more formal links with NCC could help bridge the gap in library service knowledge and expertise. It currently has a volunteer who is a former member of the council library staff, and as such still has a relationship with NCC. However, if and when this volunteer chooses to leave, it could prove difficult to maintain that relationship.

Case study 3: Castle Vale Library, West Midlands

Background

Located between Erdington, Minworth and Castle Bromwich, Castle Vale is part of Erdington District within the city of Birmingham. In January 2013, Birmingham City Council (BCC) announced a round of budget cuts at both a city- and local-level within districts. A number of services were earmarked for closure, including Castle Vale Library.

In light of this, Ray Goodwin, CEO of Castle Vale Tenants and Residents Association (CVTRA; a resident led not-for-profit organisation) commented that *“libraries aren’t just libraries; they’re places where people meet, learn and socialise”*, and requested that they take over the running of the library. After a period of negotiations, in February 2014, BCC fully transferred the running of the library to CVTRA.

Finances

BCC advised that CVTRA seek £10,000 of government funding through [Social Investment Business](#)^{ix} to undertake a pre-feasibility study to look at the viability of the opportunity. After acknowledging they needed an impartial assessment, CVTRA engaged with [Development in Social Enterprise](#)^{ix} to formulate a robust business plan which showed that it was possible to run the library without a grant.

Consequently, BCC were keen to support the venture and, after negotiations, provided CVTRA a grant of £50,000 a year for both the 2014/15 and 2015/16 periods. As a result, the council has not only saved £230,000 across the two year period, but has also helped develop the sustainability of the library. Since financial backing from BCC ceased in February 2016, Castle Vale Library, the only community-managed library in Birmingham, has saved the council around another £160,000 and has continued to thrive without any funding from BCC.

Other support

Castle Vale Library remains part of BCC’s statutory library service, maintaining access to the BCC Library Management System, and receiving in-kind support including access to book stock, inter-library loans and a van service. Indeed, BCC provided the library with the existing book stock when it first transferred to CVTRA, however, the library notes that new book stock mainly comes from community donations now rather than the council. The library also receives advice and assistance from its partner, Erdington library, which provides general support on day-to-day library issues. The

library has agreed a peppercorn rent for its site with the Education Funding Agency which owns the building; and due to the library's charitable status, it also receives a reduction on business rates.

Relationships with Stakeholders

Castle Vale Library maintains that it has a strong working relationship with BCC, which recognises the success CVTRA have made:

“After 4 years of running the library as successfully, if not better than the city council could, the most senior person in the city for libraries said in some areas we’re doing the same, but in others we are actually performing better than 4 years ago”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Indeed, the library has been asked to speak with BCC's library taskforce to tell their journey and support them with helping further libraries.

However, Castle Vale's relationship with the existing library staff's trade union has been somewhat tense. When CVTRA initially took over the running of the library, the trade union highlighted how jobs were being lost due to the involvement of volunteers, and questioned their ability to run the library without paid library staff.

With the only other option being closure, which would also result in staff job loss, Castle Vale responded by offering secondment opportunities to existing staff members at a cost to the library, which would be taken from the grant. Ultimately, however, existing staff were redeployed to other library services within the city so no job losses were incurred.

User profile

Castle Vale Library has around 1000 users, a number which has increased over the last year, which the library believes is due to the expanding services and activities which it runs, alongside more traditional services such as book loans.

“[The number of users has increased]...because we’re doing things differently. We put on lots of events like Mad Hatter’s Tea Parties and fancy dress, arts and crafts mornings, and Halloween days. This is all to get people to walk through the doors and to engage. I was invited to a library and I walked in and it was all like shhhh – and my first words were “where’s the radio?” It’s got to have some vibe to the place, got to give it some energy. Because that’s where the problem is. It’s allowed to be loud, allowed to be messy and allowed to be fun”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

The library considers itself to have a wide variety of users of all ages; and the gender mix is around 60% female and 40% male. It attributes user satisfaction to the library’s unique environment which is tailored to their needs and wants; something which they feel is much easier to do when run independently.

“We do our own thing – that’s the value of independence, doing lots of things that others don’t. It’s about the person who walks through the door. If you like the brand or atmosphere or something about that place you prefer. If you create an environment that people want, they will come through the door and what we’re doing is creating an environment people find welcoming and open”.

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Library Volunteers

There are currently 15 volunteers based in Castle Vale library, a number which has steadily increased since opening in February 2014. The library predicts this number will increase again over the coming year due to a growing interest in volunteering opportunities and a general desire from the public to help. The library also plans to increase the number of paid staff over the next few years as and when enterprise activity within the library develops, as both volunteers and paid staff underpin the success of those services. It currently has 2 paid members of staff which it funds itself. Although these staff members have been trained by the library, they are not professional librarians, but more customer service oriented.

To maintain volunteer satisfaction, Castle Vale Library believes that valuing all volunteers for the support they give is essential and this enables a good retention rate.

Yet due to the flexible nature of volunteering, timekeeping and commitment can pose issues when managing volunteers, as they are able to come and go as they please.

“Volunteers like to get involved and do things, and for them that’s the great satisfaction. We make them feel special and love them very dearly – we give them uniforms, thank them, give them food, and make them feel valued. They’re part and parcel of all this, not just a volunteer. We have a very good retention rate”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Castle Vale Library provides a range of in-house volunteer training opportunities from basic IT, database control and use of internet resources, to health and safety, safeguarding, and data protection and copyright. However, the library feels it would benefit from a more formal arrangement with an education institution which could perhaps provide an NVQ in customer service for volunteers. This idea has been explored by the library, but it feels that local colleges are reluctant to provide such training outside of the classroom; which the library needs in order to maintain its service level.

Service Delivery

Castle Vale Library offers a wide range of core services including:

- Book loans
- Library service for schools (including providing book collections/hosting class visits)
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

In addition, the library also provides these enhanced services:

- Laptop or tablet loan
- Laminating
- Book sales

- CD/ DVD sales
- Reading groups
- Parent and baby groups e.g. rhyme time
- Local History Archive
- Community events
- Café
- Database research (e.g. genealogy databases)
- Document laminating
- Meeting room hire
- Study area

Castle Vale also offers a variety of different community groups and events such as knitting groups, arts and crafts sessions and coffee mornings, and it considers these events to be most successful aspects of the library services they deliver.

“The events we put on are so well received. We’re talking about doing brave things, spreading out of the library and doing a food festival. We have lots of cookery books encouraging people to eat healthily, so we’d like to do a street food festival based outside the library”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Furthermore, the library feels that being run by the community allows it to *“do things differently”*, enabling them to be more than a book lending service and to be a focal point within the community

Plans to expand the library’s repertoire of services include developing a community cinema and theatre. It currently has a space which it piloted as a cinema in November 2016; showing a couple of productions with around 40 attendees. Feedback was particularly positive, and the library is now considering how to run the cinema for around 80-100 people.

“Just think we can do things differently. We can open at 9am on a Sunday morning, we’re not just a library, and we don’t just give out books. There are huge cultural benefits...we’re a centre point of the community. All good libraries should be this, not just a man stood behind a desk stamping books”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Sustainability

As mentioned, Castle Vale Library initially received £50,000 a year for two years from BCC. This funding ended in February 2016, and the library has since relied on direct trading and retail, paid for services, and donations from charities, trusts and or foundations as alternative income sources. Over the last three years, the library has seen a slight increase in income from direct trading and retail. This is primarily due to it undertaking more trading activities such as setting up the community cinema and theatre, and it sees this as essential to the sustainability of the library.

“The biggest cost when you go to see a film is the seat you sit in. The film itself is reasonably cheap. We looked at the cost [of hiring up-to-date films] as part of the test and you can hire for them for £80. So if we have a 60-80 seat cinema and charge £5 a head to see up-to-date films, we could generate probably a surplus of £20K a year. For a charity, small things like that that, doing interesting things, go towards the sustainability of library”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Paid for services have generated a steady income over the last three years, remaining around the same figure each year. However, the library highlighted that income from room hire actually provides the most benefit in terms of sustainability. Historically, a number of community organisations hired work space at a local school, however the school was demolished and the rebuild was much smaller than the original. As such, there is significant demand for room hire, and, due to the various spaces the library has available, such as the cinema and theatre areas, the library is able to capitalise on this.

Income from charities, trusts and foundations has significantly increased over the last three years. This is not only due to a growing interest in the uniqueness of the library, as the only community-managed library in Birmingham, but also because of the three-

tier model by which the library runs, consisting of enterprise, grants, and trust funds. Castle Vale library reports that it is very confident in securing funding from these alternative income streams, and that it sees these as very important to the future sustainability of the library. In particular, it envisages developing a strong enterprise culture with the library at the centre of the model.

“Charitable trusts are really interested in what we do because we’re not a normal charity - we have USPs and do things very differently. We put our clients and users at the heart of what we do. They would rather donate money to an organisation who has 3 layered model, grants, enterprise and trust funds because you’ve got another string to your bow, rather than knowing that [with the trust fund] that’s all there is”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Future Direction and Support

Castle Vale Library acknowledges that in-kind support from BCC may reduce or cease altogether, but it hopes it will remain the same over the coming years. There is a possibility that the council could charge the library for access to book stock and the van service. However, the library feels that, if this were to happen, it could increase its book stock through crowdfunding supplemented with the multiple book donations it already receives.

Furthermore, the library recognises that it is still working towards becoming fully sustainable, and that, in the short- to medium-term, it will require some input financially other than income secured through enterprise alone. It does, however, have a “*broad and robust business strategy*” which focuses on enterprise in the medium term.

The library suggested that the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) are best placed to provide ongoing support to pilot new ways of generating income as it is in a good position to influence and develop strategies. This could either be in the form of financial support or, somewhat more importantly, expert time and input to strengthen and develop the library’s enterprise model. Visiting the library to establish what a tailored package of support would look like, would be a welcome first step; the library feels that this would be essential in order to understand the whole ethos of the library and its goals. The library also commented on the expertise and contacts that central government may have that could support enterprising activity.

“If DCMS were to offer a small grant for a few years, and alongside that, help to develop the library into a self-sustaining library and speed the process up, we wouldn’t say no. We want to get to point where we’re not reliant on grants. Self-sufficiency is the end-game in all of this. It’s where we’re going”

(Castle Vale Library representative)

Castle Vale Library believes that there are very few further barriers to their long term sustainability, but that there is some work which needs to be done to satisfy the trade unions so that they don’t see the library as an organisation which is leading to people losing their jobs. To overcome this, the library expressed the need for general recognition that the model they have adopted can coexist successfully alongside local authority run models.

Notwithstanding these barriers and areas for support, Castle Vale Library is *“hugely confident”* that it will be sustainable for the future, provided it continues to build upon its enterprising model.

Case Study 4: Case Study Library, South East

Background

Case Study Library 4 is situated in a village in the south east of Surrey. In around January 2012, Surrey County Council (SCC) put forward a proposal to turn 13 of its smaller local authority run libraries into community-supported or community managed libraries, which would be run by volunteers. Case Study Library 4 was one of these.

Negotiations with local residents were pursued for around four and a half years until the library was officially launched as a community-managed library in June 2016. A Steering Committee is now responsible for running the library, supported by a member of staff from SCC who also attends the Steering group.

Finances

SCC currently owns the library building, which was originally donated to them in the 1950s for use as a library and museum. SCC is responsible for the maintenance of the building and all utilities bills, and as it owns the building, Case Study Library 4 does not need to pay any rent on the premises. However, the council is now looking into transferring the responsibilities for the building to a group of independent trustees and plans to lease three rooms for use by the library from those trustees; Case Study Library 4 hopes that this will come to fruition at some point this year, but report that negotiations have been ongoing for some considerable time.

Other support

In addition to providing the building, SCC also provides the book stock, IT hardware and software, PR materials, website support, access to county council services, and a limited amount of staff input for one day a week.

Relationships with Stakeholders

Case Study Library 4 has a positive relationship with both SCC and two local Parish councils. With regards to the latter in particular, the library reports that both parish councils have provided funding towards the running of the library over the last financial year, and they have encouraged the library to apply for funding in the future. One member from each of the Parish councils sits on the Steering Committee, and have both been particularly supportive to date. Case Study Library 4 hopes it can work closely with the Parish councils in the future as it looks to providing a more extensive

service to local residents than what was possible when it was originally a local authority run library.

The library has a close working relationship with SCC, particularly through a member of staff who visits the library at least once a week, who sits on the Steering Committee and plays an advisory role. The library feels that this is mostly beneficial for the volunteers who come in less frequently, as they find it reassuring to have a specialist paid member of staff around since they are not as confident as those who volunteer on a regular basis once or twice a week.

User profile

As of June 2016, Case Study Library 4 had 1040 registered users, a number which has since increased over the five months the library has been in operation. The library has a lot of younger users up to the age of around 12, and many older users over the age of 55, but not so many in between. It serves a mixed community, including a number of people who live in social housing, and also those who are more affluent. The library believes that when moving to a community-supported model, user numbers and borrowing went down, which the library felt could be due to some resistance from local residents who were not keen on attending a library which was not staffed by specialist paid staff members. However, since this initial drop in numbers, registered users have increased, which the library has attributed to word of mouth from the numerous volunteers they engage with, and an appreciation of a wider range of quality services than was offered when originally run by SCC.

“I think [users have increased] because we’ve got 50 volunteers and by the time you add to them the people they know, and the people they know, it’s been quite good in terms of getting people to come into the library and support the library... we’ve had positive feedback; the feeling is that the service hasn’t deteriorated and we’re offering a wider menu than we did before and that’s partly about the fact there are more people involved”

(Case Study Library representative)

Case Study Library 4 believes that simply providing users with what they want is fundamental to maintaining user satisfaction. However as the library is particularly small in terms of available space, this can pose as barrier, and the library feels limited by the facilities they are able to offer.

“I think there are barriers as it’s a small library, we have limited stock, we have limited facilities. We can’t offer the sophisticated IT options you’ll get elsewhere. It would be nice if we had more control, we have no control over the book stock at all and it would be good if we [did]”

(Case Study Library representative)

Library Volunteers

Case Study Library 4, has a total of 50 volunteers, a number which the library has maintained since it opened in June 2016, and which it anticipates will remain the same over the next three years, based on a low turnover. The majority of volunteers are over the age of 60, however there is also a large proportion of volunteers aged between 25 and 59. Furthermore, there are a small number of volunteers aged between 16 and 24. The library not only uses a formal agency to recruit volunteers, but also encourages visitors to join their team.

“I think we have a very stable core of volunteers. I think inevitably people come and go because people move, people’s personal situations change. We’ve had about 5 people who have dropped off for various reasons out of 50, but I would hope we’d be able to recruit some new people as people’s personal situations change they retire, they start families, they’re around in the village more”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

Each volunteer tends to have a specific role rather than having a catch-all role; for example, the library has a specific team of volunteers who focus on liaison with schools and arranging children’s activities, and it is also looking for a volunteer who could specialise in events, and another on income generating activity.

The library highlights that the greatest challenge in managing volunteers is the inherent flexibility that comes with being a volunteer. It is not possible to impose the same sanctions on a volunteer as it is on someone who is being paid, and it is important to accept what volunteers are able to offer, and incorporate that into the operation of the library. Furthermore, volunteers’ expectations of what it is like to work in a library sometimes differ from reality:

“The fact they’re volunteers, it’s not like when you’re managing paid staff you always have the ultimate sanction... With volunteers... there isn’t a bottom line, I can’t say to somebody you were paid to come and do this and you do it or ... you have to take what you can get and work out how you’re going to weave that into everything else”

“I think that most of the volunteers have come with an idea of what working in a library would entail, and I think some of them are surprised at the level of detail and also the range of administrative activities. But it’s not just all looking at books and talking to people about books, there’s an awful lot of paddling that goes on underneath the water”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

The library feels that listening to volunteers and providing them with a platform to voice their opinions is key to maintaining their satisfaction. SCC delivered a comprehensive training package to the first set of volunteers which included health and safety, customer care, information/database control, use of internet resources, data protection and copyright training, and training on the library management system. However, the library reports that new volunteers will probably be trained by both SCC and existing volunteers in the future.

Service Delivery

Case Study Library 4 offer mostly core services, but also a number of enhanced services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access
- Local History Archive
- Library service for schools including providing book collections or hosting class visits

- Parent and baby groups
- Quiz events
- Christmas readings

Case Study Library 4 considers the involvement of volunteers and members of the community the most successful aspect of the services they deliver. The library feels that since it became community-managed, it brings more cohesion to the community, encouraging people to be active rather than passive consumers of a service. The library also highlighted how people are now more aware of what facilities a library can offer:

“I think it also makes people more aware about what a library can offer and what a library could offer. You know, rather than somewhere where you come in and get three Mills and Boon books a week, there are other facilities here”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

Over the next year, the library intends to increase promotion activity and grow the number of events it puts on, and facilities it provides. For example, the library is considering visiting local care homes and providing a selection of books for the residents. However, this will be dependent on the commitment of the volunteers involved in the running of the library:

“How far we get I think is going to be an issue about how much time and energy people have got to throw at it because I think that’s the other thing with volunteers, you fit in with the other things in their lives, you can’t say to them, you’re contracted to me for 35 hours a week and you’re going to do this within 35 hours, you know, you negotiate around other things”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

Sustainability

Case Study Library 4 receives in kind support from SCC in the form of library premises, book stock, IT hardware and software, PR materials, website support, access to county council services, and a limited amount of staff input. Furthermore, when the library was first set up, SCC provided an initial [grant](#) of £2,389. The library has agreed a

memorandum of understanding with SCC, but the licence will not be finalised until the building has passed over to the new group of trustees.

As well as the in kind and financial support received from SCC, the library also receives precepts from the two parish councils in the area, which have totalled £2000 since the library opened. As the Chairs of both parish councils sit on the Steering Group for the library, they were in a position to enable the library to receive those precepts, which were used to cover costs for a launch event. The library plans to put in further bids for funding from the parish councils in the future.

The library has put on a number of fundraising events including a launch quiz, Christmas readings, and book sales, which have netted almost £1000 for the library to date. However, although both the quiz and Christmas readings generated the most income for the library out of all the enhanced services they offer, the library feels that targeting events and facilities towards children and families will provide the most benefit in terms of supporting the future sustainability of the library. In particular, the library envisages holding a story time after school for school children, and perhaps arranging a children's short story competition:

“I think in terms of sustainability it's about catering for children and families in a sense, to open the library up to people when they're young and perhaps they've got young families and sort of to get people in the habit of using it”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

The library expects events to form a significant income stream for the future. From experience, it recognises that there is an *“enormous amount of goodwill”* amongst volunteers and the wider community, and it is confident it will be able to generate funding from various occasions. Amongst other events, it is planning a day in the summer dedicated to children in the garden, a Halloween event, and further Christmas readings.

In addition, the library has also received a donation of £200 from a neighbourhood social networking organisation. The library would welcome income through further donations from charities; indeed, it has identified that there are certain charities who may be interested in funding specific projects such as the local care home venture. However, although there are volunteers who have experience in bidding for funding, the library feels that it currently lacks a strategic focus to be successful.

The library is very comfortable with the notion of income generating activity in general, provided that activity reflects the more traditional understanding of what a library does. Furthermore, the library is particularly conscious of not directly competing with other providers in the area:

“I think if we’re going to raise money we have to do something that looks as if its related to what is generally understood of what libraries do, so, we wouldn’t perhaps offer a job club or something like that, partly because we got nowhere to put one but and partly because I think we would feel that expertise exists elsewhere. There are also quite a lot of activities which are offered in the community centre and we have to be careful that we’re not going to compete with them”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

Future Direction and Support

Case Study Library 4 envisages the in-kind and financial support from SCC to remaining the same, although appreciates that support could decrease amidst local authority resourcing changes.

Case Study Library 4 acknowledge that it will need to focus more on other income sources, noting that alternative sources of income are increasingly important to the library’s sustainability. Sourcing appropriate volunteers with the right skillset to bid for funding will be fundamental to this. However, the library believes that in order to maintain a steady stream of income from alternative sources, funding needs to be spent on things which are tangible, so that the benefit of that additional income can be seen:

“If you’re going to generate income as a community library, you have to be able to demonstrate what you’re using the income for, you can’t just sort of lose it within your bank account and say, oh by the way, and we bought tea and coffee for the volunteers or something like that. You have to have a very clear idea how you’re going to spend it; otherwise it becomes very difficult to raise money”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

In order to address this, the library plans to continue interacting with the wider community, demonstrating the range of services it is now able to offer, and which were previously unavailable. It has a regular column in the local community's newsletter which reports on recent events at the library and it is also used to publicise future activity.

In terms of additional support, the library feels it would benefit from assistance in developing a more ambitious strategic view of what it wants the library to achieve. Some volunteers are very comfortable with this, however others see the library in a more traditional sense:

“I think it’s just not something [all volunteers] would contemplate or really think about. They think of a library as somewhere where you go to get books, you might use a computer, you might get a DVD you might get an audio book but they don’t go any further than that and they perhaps don’t think about how libraries have to change because the context within which you’re working is changing”

(Case Study Library 4 representative)

In addition, Case Study library 4 feels that access to a network of community managed libraries would enable it to see how other libraries are generating income, and discuss common problems and issues. The library also feels there needs to be recognition and respect for volunteers who are taking on a role which was once done by paid/specialist staff and that they may not necessarily have the same skills and expertise.

Finally, with regards to the sustainability of the library, Case Study Library 4 is confident it will be sustainable given that it has got a good foundation of volunteers and funds to continue providing the service.

Case Study 5: South Chingford Library, London

Background

South Chingford is a district based in the London borough of Waltham Forest. South Chingford serves the 'Valley' Ward which has a population of just over 11,500. However, the borough of Waltham Forest has a population of around 262,600. In 2011, Waltham Forest Council (WFC) announced a requirement to save around £65 million over the following four years. To do this, they needed to close two public libraries, one of which was South Chingford Library. After the library closed in 2011, WFC held a meeting to establish whether there was any interest amongst the community in setting up the library as a community library. Subsequently, the community came together and agreed to take over the running of the library.

Finance

The library is currently based in a building which WFC leases from a local business and provides to the library for free. The current lease runs out in 2022 and at present the library does not pay any business rates. The library generates the majority of its income from grant funds sourced from the Waltham Forest Community Ward Forum. Over the past three years, income from this source has fluctuated, from £7,000 in 2013/14, to £9,100 in 2014/15, and down to £5,795 in 2015/16.

Other support

Although WFC closed the original library, it identified new premises for South Chingford Library early in 2012. WFC supplied 8,000 books, shelving, and computers which were originally located in the previous library. Once the library had been established, it was officially opened in April 2012 by the Mayor of Waltham Forest, and local MP, Iain Duncan Smith alongside Boris Johnson, then Mayor of London.

Relationships with Stakeholders

Although the library does not have any formal relationship with WFC, it does maintain contact on an ad-hoc basis regarding the premises which it considers "*a friendly relationship but not a close one*". South Chingford Library does, however, regularly attend the Waltham Forest Community Ward Forum meetings, where funding for local causes is made available.

The library intends to continue bidding for funding at the Ward Forum meetings, and on the whole does not see the relationship with WFC changing dramatically. However, it does recognise that the council may want to create a formal agreement about

charging business rates for the library. If this becomes the case, it would have difficulty in generating sufficient income to cover the charges and would need to consider alternative options with regards to the premises.

User profile

South Chingford Community Library operates a membership scheme with library subscriptions. It currently has 290 members who can borrow books, and have access to 15 minutes of free internet usage. Adult members pay £1 a year and children pay 50p a year. A seven year membership costs £5 and the library charge £10 for lifetime membership. The majority of users are members of the public who come in to borrow books and use the internet which is charged at 50p per hour.

The library reports that, each year the number of users increases slightly, probably due to awareness of its services being built up through word of mouth recommendations. However, it also notes that some people still think of the library as being run by the local authority:

“There are still people who come in and think we’re a council run library and that closed in 2011. There are quite a number of people who come in and ask us a question thinking we’re from Waltham Forest direct council advice service and we’re helpful, we answer as best we can, but then they walk out not even being aware we’re a community library”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

The library believes the vast majority of users are residents from the local community, however it is particularly difficult to define this area as the library serves two local wards. It also believes that around only 10% of the local population use its services, and this low number is due to a lack of awareness of the library’s existence.

Although it does not collect user demographic data, the library reports that the users within their area are very mixed. Most of the people who visit the library are from the UK, however they also have a number of international users who come into the library to take advantage of the language classes. The library maintains that it encourages a range of people from all backgrounds to visit the library:

“We try to encourage everyone to come. We encourage disabled people to come, autistic volunteers, and people coming in in wheelchairs. A lot of the ladies who come in to do knitting come in with walking frames. Some of them are probably not that well off. There are quite a few homeless people in our area, it’s not that affluent but quite mixed. The majority of users are not [homeless] but a few who come in are definitely disadvantaged”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

The library believes that slightly more females than males use the library, potentially due to the number of mothers who attend the library with their children. The age range of users is also very varied; however most are young or older age groups, with fewer users being middle-aged.

The library believes that offering a friendly and helpful service is the best way to maintain user satisfaction:

“We try to be as helpful as we can, assist them with anything they need. We provide elderly people help with filling in forms. People come in and say to us you’re the only place around here that can give us help with things like this. Judging by informal feedback, the way to maintain user satisfaction is to be as friendly and helpful as possible”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

Library Volunteers

Over the past three years, the number of volunteers at the library has slowly increased. When the library first opened there were 15 volunteers and now there are 70. It believes this is due to the library becoming increasingly prominent in the community, having the effect of increasing the number of volunteers who are offering their time. It envisages the number of volunteers will continue increasing for the same reasons. Although the majority of its volunteers are older, the library also gets a steady influx of younger, unemployed volunteers who are enthusiastic about developing the library. However, these volunteers tend not stay with the library for long periods as they eventually find employment and cease volunteering.

The library notes that the greatest challenge in managing volunteers is the ability to communicate effectively with all its volunteers due to varying shift patterns:

“We have a massive communication problem – it’s because the library operates on five separate days, and by and large volunteers only work on one day. So from the point of view of managing the organisation it’s like running five individual companies. So people who do something on one day, will trip over what someone’s doing on another day because they don’t even know what’s happening on the other days”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

To combat this, it uses a message book for volunteers on different shifts to communicate with each other. However, it is also developing a system whereby volunteers will provide time across a number of shifts to increase communication and stop the reliance on a message book. It believes that keeping volunteers informed and communicating with them as much as possible is the greatest factor in maintaining volunteer satisfaction.

The library’s volunteer coordinator provides a training package for volunteers which incorporates health and safety, basic IT, data protection, copyright training, and training on the library management system. The library feels that using organisations such as Community Waltham Forest, who support community businesses, provides all the other additional training volunteers need.

Service Delivery

The following core services are provided at South Chingford Community Library:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Library service for schools including providing book collections or hosting class visits
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- Health groups e.g. Macmillan cancer support or dementia/carers
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

In addition, the library also offers the following enhanced services:

- Digital skills classes or training
- Creative groups
- Parent and baby groups e.g. rhyme time
- Community events
- Job clubs
- Language/ conversation classes
- Craft sales
- Document laminating
- Meeting room/ work space hire
- Exhibition areas
- Knitting class
- Local organisation group meetings
- Database research (e.g. genealogy databases)

It believes the most successful aspect of the service it offers is the provision of volunteering opportunities for the unemployed, where they can gain work experience and enhance their CV for future employment. It also sees itself as a place which brings the community together, offering isolated people a place to socialise.

“It’s the only place in South Chingford which is non-commercial and non-denominational where people can meet. We don’t try and sell them anything, they don’t have to buy a cup of coffee, they don’t have to be of any specific religion. In that sense we provide a unique place. It’s a place that any library would offer but we’re the only library now in our area. I think that’s an important thing that we offer”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

Sustainability

As mentioned, the current lease on the building where the library is situated runs out in 2022. Furthermore, the library generates the majority of its income from grant funds sourced from the Waltham Forest Community Ward Forum. Over the past three years income from this source has fluctuated. This variation in income is due to the library submitting fewer bids in 2015/16, as it felt there were better local causes the Ward Forum could fund:

“We specifically chose not to put in further funding bids because there are other local funding bids which we thought were very good and we didn’t want to jeopardise their chance of getting the money”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

The library also receives an income from direct trading and retail. People often donate books to the library and due to insufficient storage space, it holds book sales which raise approximately £1,200 a year. The library anticipates this figure increasing as it constantly receives donated books.

In addition, the library runs a knitting group which creates items for sale. In the 2015/16 financial year, this generated £1,240 which was an increase over the previous year (which generated £850).

The library also generates income from hiring out meeting space. Use of the space includes the Community Ward Forum meetings, which take place four times a year, and local councillor monthly surgeries. Over the previous three years, income through hiring meeting space has increased slightly. The library anticipates it will remain static at around £1000 a year for the foreseeable future, unless users of the space decide to hold meetings and surgeries elsewhere.

The library believes that the service which provides the most benefit for its future sustainability is the sale of books:

“I think the book sales - if we wanted to generate more, if we could cope with more books, and if we advertised the fact that we were looking for books for the library, we’d probably be swamped with them and then we could work even harder at selling them. That would be the most straightforward for us to generate income by”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

As may be expected, it reports that it is very comfortable with income generating activity and that it is confident in securing future funding due to the experience it has built up. It also sees alternative sources of income as increasingly important to its future sustainability, as it recognises it will need to generate additional income by

bidding for more funding in the future. However, it does highlight that it needs more expertise in terms of volunteers who are capable of writing funding bids. Subsequently, it has approached the registered charity 'The Mill'^{ix} in Waltham Forest, to provide advice on doing this. However, it understands that applying for funding requires tight deadlines to be met, which can be problematic when volunteer availability is limited. Recruitment of volunteers with this sort of expertise is high on its agenda.

Future Direction and Support

The library envisages that the grant funding from Waltham Forest Community Ward Forum will increase in the future. Historically, this has been the most successful income stream. However, as its lead volunteer on developing income generating activities has left, the library will need to rely more heavily on the Ward funding in the short term until new sources of income can be found.

The library perceives its main barrier to growth to be its inability to redevelop the building in which it is situated, as it has no control over what is done with the premises. Furthermore, there is uncertainty as to what will happen to the library once the lease on the premises ceases in July 2022:

“If we had our upstairs space, our building would be just about perfect. We’d be able to split the books between upstairs and downstairs, but now we’re limited on space. When we have a major event going on we have to make the whole of the downstairs library space available because there can be 60 or 70 people coming in. The other longer term one is that we are going to lose the building as things stand in July 2022. That’s a total unknown 5 years in the future”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

Plans to tackle this barrier are limited as the library is aware it is unlikely that anyone will want to invest a large amount of money into a building which only has five years left on the lease.

Looking to the future, it would like further financial support in the form of grants to cover the day-to-day costs of the running the library. However, it recognises that this type of funding is limited and there are other causes which may be considered more important:

“The very small volunteer library in Leytonstone has its day-to-day running costs covered by the Peabody trust. If we could get a relationship with some sort of organisation who’d cover our running costs...but I don’t think that sort of money is available. I don’t think there’s anything realistic that can be done, as people are trying to save money and there are other more pressing needs like the NHS. Social care would come in front of a community library”

(South Chingford Community Library representative)

Overall, the library is confident its service will be sustained until at least July 2022. However, with the uncertainty regarding the lease on the premises, what will happen beyond this time is unknown. It also highlights that the goodwill from the community and the desire to have a local library would likely ensure its future sustainability.

Case Study 6: Gargrave and Malhamdale Library, Yorkshire

Background

Situated south of the Yorkshire Dales, Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library is based in the centre of the village of Gargrave, which has a population of approximately 1700. Amidst a savings review by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) in 2012, the library was set for closure unless a suitable organisation agreed to provide the building and finance; in return, NYCC would provide in-kind support. The local authority run library was originally based in a rented room in the local village hall. As such, the volunteer committee who now manage the community library entered into an agreement with the village hall committee to continue renting the room. The library initially closed for a matter of weeks, whilst it underwent building works, and on 5 May 2012, the library reopened as a community library, with charitable status.

Finance

For the library's first three years of operation as a community library, the local parish council paid the rent on the premises in the village hall. This support ceased in 2016, however; since then the library has made sufficient annual income to cover the cost of rent.

Other support

NYCC provide the library with in-kind support such as book stock; access to the library management system; two computers; a self-issue terminal; photocopiers; a scanner, and a telephone system. In addition, from 2016, the library was also able to offer free WiFi due to Libraries Taskforce securing funding to roll out free WiFi in public libraries across England. NYCC also offers support from dedicated paid staff who provide technical support and training.

Relationship with Stakeholders

Gargrave and Malhamdale Library has a formal service level agreement with NYCC whereby the library must deliver an agreed core service and meet certain targets. The library meets with a representative from NYCC at least once a month to cover any issues the library is having, although the library highlights how major issues are currently dealt with directly via email with NYCC rather than waiting for the monthly meeting.

The library believes it has a good relationship with NYCC and it understands the complex nature of the role that NYCC play. Moving forward, it sees this relationship continuing as NYCC work together with the libraries which will be run by volunteers as of April 2017.

“As far as I’m concerned our relationship with North Yorkshire County Council is good. I get on very well with my contact at the council, and we appreciate that sometimes the restrictions that are placed on [council] employees and we can’t always get a straight answer and I think over years we’ve come to accept this”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

User profile

Most registered users at the library come from the village of Gargrave as well as the surrounding Dales villages. However the library also serves a minority of users from outside of the immediate resident community area. For example, one family who regularly use the library live outside North Yorkshire; however they often come to Gargrave for ballet lessons in the village hall, and subsequently use the library when they visit the area.

“We do have one family registered with us who don’t even live in North Yorkshire. But because their daughter comes to ballet lessons in the village hall, they’ve registered with us because they like the little library and the parents come and chose their books whilst their daughter is in the lesson, and then after the lesson, the daughter comes in and chooses hers”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

The library describes the make-up of its users to be “*across the board*” with regards to those who are more disadvantaged or affluent. Its adult members are predominantly over the age of 50, mostly female; and junior members again are mostly female.

In order to maintain user satisfaction, Gargrave and Malhamdale Library believe that the friendliness, willingness and helpfulness of volunteers is fundamental. Users recognise that volunteers try their best to help them and understand that they are not professional librarians.

Furthermore, users are appreciative that volunteers have kept the library running when otherwise it would have closed.

Library Volunteers

Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library currently has around 20 volunteers; around 80% are over the age of 60, and 20% are aged between 25 and 59. The number of volunteers has remained fairly static over the last three years. The library comments on how occasionally volunteers leave due to other commitments or because they move away from the area, but it is able to quickly recruit new volunteers as and when this happens.

From April 2017, the library will be responsible for a home delivery service, delivering books to people unable to get to library, and is actively seeking more volunteers who will help with this. However, in general, the library envisages maintaining the current number of volunteers, mostly because it opens for 12 hours per week and only requires two volunteers for each three-hour shift. If the library recruit too many volunteers, this would reduce the amount of times each volunteer can complete a shift, and as such may lose interest

Currently, volunteers receive in house training on information/database control, use of internet resources, and training on the library management system. Initially, this programme of training was delivered by NYCC, however the library now feels it has the experience to manage this training itself. The library currently provides new volunteers with a training manual, but perceives on-the-job training with more experienced members of the team as much more effective. As such, the library does not have any additional formal training needs for their volunteers.

“When any new volunteer comes, there’s a training manual, and my belief is that you learn far better when you’re doing the job. So I encourage new volunteers to go on duty with the more experienced volunteers, because they learn as they go along. There’s a handbook there so if they come across a problem, that will show them what to do. We don’t have any specific training needs because on-hand experience is worth far more than a training session and we feel it’s a model that works”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

The library feels that the largest challenge in managing volunteers relates to training. When it holds specific in-house training sessions, arranging for all volunteers to be present at the same time is particularly difficult, and as such it tends to need to hold multiple sessions to accommodate all of the volunteers' needs. Moreover, ensuring there are enough volunteers to cover the required opening hours and guarantee that the library stays open can be challenge. The library reports that as the majority of volunteers are retired and sometimes have other commitments, this can be problematic at times.

The library maintains volunteer satisfaction by creating a friendly atmosphere to work in and having an appointed person to speak to about any problems, should they ever need to.

“If they have any problems they know I’m always available to help them. They also know if I can’t resolve the issue, I’ll find someone who can. It’s a very friendly atmosphere amongst volunteers and borrowers alike”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

Service Delivery

Gargrave and Malhamdale Library offer the full range of core services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

Additionally, the library offer the following enhanced services:

- Digital skills classes or training
- E-book loans
- E-magazines/e-newspapers

- Community events
- Database research (e.g. genealogy databases)

The library considers the most successful aspect of the services it delivers to be simply keeping the library running, and delivering a service that people value, when otherwise it would be closed:

“I do feel people value having a library. If it wasn’t in this village, people would have to travel into Skipton, and library use would probably decrease because people would have to go a lot further out of their way to borrow and return books, which would probably deter a lot of people”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

Additional, less tangible benefits cited by the library include bringing a sense of community to the village and surrounding area. Furthermore, the library feels it provides volunteers with a sense of purpose, as well as social contact for those who may be isolated:

“It’s nice to have a sense of purpose for the volunteers, knowing you’re providing a service that people value. Also if people come and borrow a book, they might have had a chat with someone, when they might have not had any contact with anyone else that day. Also, because we have a home service that runs from the library, some of the people who benefit from that service may not have any other contact other than the person delivering those books, which is a social benefit”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

Due to the library being particularly small, the range of services it can provide is currently restricted. The library feels it has maximised use of the space it has at present, and as such does not feel it can improve on its current offer.

Sustainability

Gargrave and Malhamdale Library believes that the in kind support they receive from NYCC will continue. It has a new service ¹⁴³level agreement which starts in April 2017,

however the council has not indicated that there will be any notable changes to the support it will provide.

With regards to paid for services, the library currently generates income from photocopying, printing, and charges for requesting books and audio books. This income has remained approximately the same over the last three years because charges are currently determined by NYCC which has kept them as they were.

When the library first opened as a CL, the management committee wrote to every household in the resident area asking if they would be willing to contribute to the running of the library; this initially raised over £5000. Since then, the library has held a number of fundraising events such as film nights, talks, and a coffee morning once a year. This activity has increased the library's income by £1500 in the last three years.

The library also has a "100 Club", where people pay £2.50 a month to be entered into a monthly draw where they can win a variety of different prizes. Currently, there are 107 people who belong to the club; prizes are controlled by the Charity Commission and the library is obliged to offer a certain amount of the income raised in prizes. Overall, income from fundraising has significantly increased over the last three years, predominantly because of the 100 Club, but also because the film nights are particularly popular.

"The film nights have become very popular. In 2015, when the Tour de France came through our village, we held a special film night. Instead of having seats in rows, we set it in the style of a cafe with tables and chairs and people brought their own refreshments, which makes it a very social evening and the film we watched was very popular in the village"

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

The library considers both the 100 Club and film nights to provide the library with the most benefit in terms of future sustainability. The 100 Club provides "*a reliable income*" which can cover rent and service charges such as heating, lighting and cleaning. Moreover, although the income from film nights fluctuates depending on the weather and type of film the library is showing, they generally raise around £200 after hiring the village hall. In addition, the library often runs a raffle at the film nights, with prizes contributed from the community, which can generate around £50-80 over the evening.

Gargrave and Malhamdale Library describes itself as “*very confident*” in raising income from paid for services and fundraising due to the continued support from the local community:

“We’re very confident because of the ambience of whole village; people support things, all things that go on in the village. We have members of the 100 Club who don’t use the library, and we have people who come to the film nights who don’t use the library, but they know how valuable the library is to other people, so they’re willing to come and support us and they get a good evening out”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

The library states that the only barrier to securing such income would be if it were unable to hire the films. An external organisation which also relies on funding currently provides the films, and if this relationship were to cease, the library recognises that income would decrease. However, it also believes that if this were to happen, it could easily devise another income generating activity. Gargrave and Malhamdale perceives other sources of income, other than that provided by NYCC as “*very important*” to the future sustainability of the library, and is “*reasonably comfortable*” with income generating activity:

“It’s a shame we have to fundraise. It would be better if it were funded as it used to be funded, and it feels like you’re taxing people to have a library. But it is what it is, and we just get on with it. The majority of us feel that it’s something that’s been landed on us but because our belief in having libraries is so great, that’s why we do it”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

Future Direction and Support

Although Gargrave and Malhamdale library has not received any financial support from NYCC to date, the council has recently confirmed it has will cover a proportion of the library’s rent and service charges in the future. In addition, NYCC announced in December 2016, that it has also allocated £4000 for the financial year 2017/18, which can be used to cover costs for decorating and furniture. However, the library is currently unaware whether it will need to tender for this funding or if there will be any

restrictions on what the funding can be spent on. Moreover, it is unsure whether funding will be available in future years.

Barriers to growth identified by the library include funding and building restrictions; although the library has a children's section, it feels it would be beneficial to have an area where they could run 'Storytime' for children. Furthermore, the library feels it would benefit from generally having more room to offer a wider range of books; however because of the limited space in the library at present, this is not feasible without considerable financial input to adapt the premises.

“We wouldn't mind a bigger building. We'd like to extend the building if funds became available. There are plans that have already been drawn up but we would need to raise an awful lot of money in order to do that. We could have a drive to get funding, but in this day and age people's pockets have a bottom and when so many cuts are being made for other services, it's a low priority”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

With regards to any additional support need to undertake income generation, the library reports that this is dependent on the amount of funding it receives from NYCC. This will dictate how much it needs to rely upon fundraising and other income generating activity. However, currently the library believes it does not need any additional support in this area.

Although the library believes it has the support it needs, Gargrave and Malhamdale library highlights the importance of paid employees and the breadth of knowledge and expertise they have which it feels is not easily transferrable to volunteers. The library suggests that there could be national support in further training for volunteers to expand their knowledge, however it feels that training volunteers as qualified librarians is unrealistic.

“When we had paid librarians, when you returned books, they would say “oh we’ve got a new book, this would suit you” whereas volunteers don’t necessarily, they possibly read what they’re interested in, but librarians have the breadth of knowledge and would know immediately where to go or other authors to suggest”

(Gargrave and Malhamdale Community Library representative)

Overall, the library is “very confident” about its sustainability for the future. Regardless of the increase in use of electronic devices to access books, the library’s experience tells it that people still *“like to have a book in their hand”*.

Case Study 7: Somersham Library, Cambridgeshire, East

Background

Based near the centre of Cambridgeshire, Somersham is a village and civil parish situated between Peterborough and Cambridge, with a resident population of just under 4000 people. In 2003, after a review of the statutory requirement, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) put together plans to close 10 of 42 local authority run libraries as they were no longer considered necessary to fulfil this requirement. However, in the case of Somersham Library, and the other 9 libraries, the local communities came forward and offered to run them as a “Library Access Point”.

From 2003 until 2012, Somersham library was run by volunteers as a constituted community group. Since then the library has become a registered charity and is a company limited by guarantee that has a board of directors and trustees.

Finance

The building in which Somersham Library is based is currently owned by CCC. When the library first became volunteer-run, CCC entered into an arrangement with the local parish council on a peppercorn rent arrangement, where the council charge rent but also provide a grant to cover it. The parish council subsequently allowed the library to use the building. The library does not pay rent on the premises, but does cover all maintenance and repair costs.

Other support

Somersham Library is formally linked to the main county council library provision. It is considered a “Library Access Point” meaning it uses the CCC library lending computer system. It has a service level agreement whereby CCC provide initial training on the use of the library management system, a computer to operate the system; provision of three public computers and free Wi-Fi, IT support, and a small amount of large print books. However, the majority of the library’s books come from donations or book buying through the library’s own funds. Although the library currently does not receive any financial support from CCC, when the library first opened in 2003 it received a cash grant from the council. However, this stopped in 2009 due to public sector funding pressures.

Relationship with Stakeholders

As Somersham Library is closely aligned with CCC's library provision, it is in regular contact and has a collaborative relationship. Their service level agreement requires the library to provide CCC with a business plan which explains how it will run the library, what performance monitoring it carries out and future plans. Annual meetings are held between CCC and libraries in their local authority area which cover any issues the libraries have, any changes in support provision which might affect the libraries, in addition to allowing the libraries to share their experiences. Furthermore, Somersham are in email contact with the other nine CLs in the county, and shares information and experiences as and when necessary.

“It is a collaborative relationship which has changed dramatically from when the library first started. As a result of CCC closing libraries, the relationship wasn't as good at the beginning. As soon as everybody realised the economy was a problem and there would be public sector funding cuts, we do now understand each other a lot more and I think our relationship with the county council will continue to be working together”

(Somersham Library representative)

User profile

It is not possible to calculate the total number of users at the library, because users with a CCC library card can access any library within the CCC area, including all CLs. However, the current number of active book borrowers at Somersham Library is around 500. This figure has decreased slightly from 670 in 2014. The library believes this is due to the increasing number of alternative ways to access books, for example e-books, which is not currently monitored by the library. In addition, the library notes how younger users often engage in other activities at the library which would not be counted in this figure. It also highlights how people now use online resources to find non-fiction information rather than physical books.

Nonetheless, the library feels it still attracts a considerable number of people. The library states that data which outlines the types of books borrowed shows that approximately 60% are from adult sections and 40% from junior sections. With regards to maintaining user satisfaction, Somersham Library tries to simply provide users with what they need. Although it acknowledges that this is sometimes a difficult feat, the library assesses satisfaction through looking at how popular events are. For example,

for the Summer Reading Challenge, the library was able to gauge satisfaction through the number of children who attended.

Library Volunteers

Over the last three years, the number of volunteers at Somersham Library has remained approximately static. Currently there are around 47 registered, but not all are active. The library reports that it does have a turnover of volunteers, usually because of moving away from the village or getting a full time job. However, when people move to the village, they are often attracted to volunteering at the library so they can meet new people. The library hopes that the number of volunteers will at the least remain the same over the next year and increase over the next three years. It is currently making efforts to increase the numbers through promoting the library as a 'good cause'.

The library perceives the biggest challenge in managing volunteers is sustaining their active involvement, and ensuring there are enough volunteers to cover the rota, which can be particularly problematic. Nevertheless, the library is looking at succession planning, as certain volunteers are heavily involved in particular aspects. However, it acknowledges that volunteers can and do leave, so it tries to ensure that all services are covered by a larger pool of volunteers rather than relying on one or two people. Furthermore, the library does receive some assistance from a volunteer centre in Cambridgeshire. However as there are many volunteering opportunities in Somersham, other than those offered by the library, many organisations are competing for volunteers.

“We have some help from a volunteer centre in Cambridgeshire and they advertise our volunteering opportunities and so we are able to attract wider attention. The problem with Somersham is that there are many activities that people can join in, so everybody is fighting for volunteers”

(Somersham Library representative)

In terms of maintaining volunteer satisfaction, Somersham Library holds annual volunteer social events bringing all the volunteers together to socialise and get to know one another. The library has a management team who are there to address any issues which volunteers may have. Although the library has never formally collected data on volunteer satisfaction, in 2015 it won the Cambridgeshire Valuing Volunteers Award, which it feels provides a good indicator of satisfaction.

Somersham Library currently provides volunteers with a training package that encompasses health and safety, information and database control, training on the library management system, and book stock processing. However, it would like to be able to access training on marketing and social media, with which it particularly struggles. The library highlights most of the volunteers are over 60 and are not always adept with social media, yet this is a very useful tool in promoting the library to younger generations. As such, the library feels that any free training in this area would be especially attractive. However, it recognises that training provided by CCC would probably come at a cost given its tight budget.

Service Delivery

Somersham Library offers the following range of core services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Library service for schools including providing book collections or hosting class visits
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

Additionally, the library offer the following enhanced services:

- Digital skills classes or training
- Health groups e.g. Macmillan cancer support or dementia/carers
- Reading groups
- Parent and baby groups e.g. rhyme time
- Craft sales
- Document Laminating
- Exhibition areas
- Book sale
- Local events/ education/ health information
- Plant sale
- Community events

- Meeting room/ work space hire

The library considers the most successful aspects of service it delivers to be providing a place where people can access free resources such as books and other information, but also where they can meet people and socialise. In particular, the library feels that younger people benefit more from using the services it offers, whereas older people value the social benefits of having a local library.

In addition, the library feels that “it makes the village more attractive as a community”, providing a place to go, events to attend, and somewhere to access information. Moreover, the library highlights the part it plays in the health and wellbeing agenda, which is a key element of the community’s localism agenda. For example, it provides a venue for Somersham Time Bank and Somersham Local Nature Reserve to meet and host coffee mornings. The library also runs joint events with these organisations such as community orchard apple day, health walks, and cooking demonstrations.

In order to improve services, Somersham Library wants to focus on encouraging reading, particularly in children, so they see the library as a go-to resource. It takes a proactive approach where they continually look for areas to develop and then act upon this. For example, it has identified that borrowing books amongst young adults is poor, and so is developing a project where it is refreshing its book stock to be more attractive to young adults and promoting that it has done so.

Sustainability

In-kind support received from CCC has remained the same over the past three years. The library substantially relies on access to the county-wide book stock, IT support, and a grant to cover rent which they receive from CCC. However, looking forward, Somersham Library recognises that this support could decrease amidst local authority budget pressures, and are conscious that it could be charged for any of these services. Therefore, it may need to look at ways to tackle this issue, such as the possibility of asset transfer.

“If we do have to pay full rent, there’s no way the library can do that. It is unlikely that the council will do that, but in response we could look into asset transfer, there might be a way that [the building] could be transferred to the community. This isn’t something we’ve looked at but is a possibility because we’re a company limited by guarantee and registered charity which means we now have the status to consider it”

(Somersham Library representative)

Fundraising activity at the library has generally increased over the last three years. However, it has fluctuated within this period as for some time the library did not have a fundraising team leader. Notwithstanding this, fundraising activity has intensified recently. The library is a membership organisation with a Friends of the Library group where members are charged a subscription. The library comments that although support through this group has dropped slightly, a large amount of membership support remains. Over the next three years, Somersham Library will be concentrating its efforts on fundraising and competitive grant applications, now it is a registered charity. To date it has been predominantly focused on local fundraising and only applied for major expenditure grants, such as repairs to the exterior of the library building. However, it intends to apply for more opportunities to bring in larger sums of money and continues to run fundraising events such as running a village quiz and selling books at coffee mornings, as it views these as providing the most benefit in terms of future sustainability.

“So I still think it will increase further because we’re looking at other opportunities not just fundraising and also because we became a charity in 2012, we are looking more at grant funding applications”

“The only things that happen in the library that generate income are the fundraising events, for example we may have a coffee morning where we sell books and coffee. Or we run village quiz where we charge for entry tickets, which we class as fundraising income [and those provide most benefit in terms of future sustainability]”

(Somersham Library representative)

Historically, the library's utility bills have been covered by precepts from the parish council, and the library envisages this remaining the same for the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, if CCC were to start charging rent on the premises, the library is cognisant that the parish council would not likely be able to cover this cost.

In terms of future income streams, the library notes that these will primarily consist of grant funding from the local authority to cover the cost of rent; precepts from parish council; competitive grants; and income generating activities such as paid for services, fundraising and crowdfunding. Somersham library reports that it is confident in achieving such income because of the wealth of support amongst the local community. Indeed event participation is usually very high, demonstrating how the community value the library. The village carnival committee runs an annual carnival, and any funds which are raised are then donated to local community groups. Each year the library has applied for this funding which traditionally amounts to £100-200.

The library rates alternative sources of income other than the grant funding provided by CCC to cover rent as “*very important*”; as fundraising is currently the only way it can cover running costs. It is also “*very comfortable*” with the notion of income generation, such as organising events, coffee mornings, and the selling of books, crafts and plants which have been donated by volunteers. However, the library perceives this type of activity to be different to charging for core services, which it would not wish to do. Furthermore, the library is particularly mindful of avoiding direct competition with local traders:

“While income generation is important, and we’re very comfortable in doing that, it does not mean we would charge for all our services. When we do charge for services, for example in using the photocopier, we do look into local competition as we don’t want to be directly competing with or undercutting local provision”

(Somersham Library representative)

In terms of barriers to securing this future income, the library notes that because it is entirely run by volunteers, there are certain skills and knowledge that it does not have. For example, the library currently does not have a marketing team or anyone developing projects for grant applications; indeed, volunteers tend to be focused on the day-to-day running of the existing library service. Moreover, the library highlights that if it wants to apply for more grant funding, it will need more people with these specialised skills. To overcome this, the library plans to continue volunteer recruitment

and organise a marketing team, but acknowledges it is limited by both the time and availability of suitably skilled people as volunteers.

Future Direction and Support

The library perceives its barriers to growth to be mainly related to volunteer availability and capability, in addition to the national trend which shows that fewer people are reading. It recognises that the latter is not something it can easily control, but it can ensure that the book stock is relevant to users' needs and wants, and run activities which encourage people to read. However the library highlights that volunteer availability and capability in running such events is also related to this:

“At the moment the library joins in with the Summer Reading Challenge, but if we have more volunteers we can have more reading events to encourage young people, but that depends on having volunteers who are willing to lead such projects”

(Somersham Library representative)

With regards to any additional support for income generation, the largest gap that the library has identified is free specialised support, for example in marketing or social media:

“I know a lot of libraries and community hubs provide digital training, so training people to get online, or training people to use laptops or social media. We have a limited number of volunteers who can do that, but there was free training that would be helpful or free training for people to be more specialised in marketing and social media”

(Somersham Library representative)

In terms of local or national support, Somersham Library has spoken with CCC about more collaboration and networking with both community and public libraries in Cambridgeshire, as *“learning best practice from others would be useful”*. The council has highlighted the ‘Community Libraries Peer Network’ to the library, which it is particularly keen to join. Furthermore, it values opportunities to participate in research about CLs as it feels it helps raise the profile of the library.

Overall, Somersham Library is confident about its future sustainability, noting the importance of volunteer commitment and enthusiasm. However, it also underlines how in-kind support received from CCC greatly contributes to its outlook and how any emphasis placed on the value of community libraries would help its cause.

Case Study 8: Delph Library, North West

Background

Situated on the outskirts of Greater Manchester in the North West, Delph is a village in the civil parish of Saddleworth, which has a population of just over 25,500. In 2004, Oldham Council (OC) put forward plans to close Delph Library in light of a budget saving scheme. However, OC agreed that if volunteers were to run the library, it would provide book stock and pay the overheads for another year to allow the library time to research other sources of income.

Finance

The library closed in March 2005, but following the implementation of a service level agreement, the library re-opened as a CL in May 2005 for 9 hours a week. After the first year, OC withdrew funding for overheads. However Delph Community Association (DCA), a charity which aims to maintain and improve life in the village, raised enough money to cover the costs and the library continued to run as a CL until 2011, when a new service level agreement with OC was put in place. This agreement was between OC and DCA; it set out terms whereby OC would provide Delph Library with a yearly grant and a library assistant to cover all opening hours.

Other support

Delph Library is currently housed in a building owned by OC, which has been leased to the Millgate Arts Centre Ltd on a 30 lease with peppercorn rent. This organisation also owns a theatre based in the same building. Although the library does not pay rent, it is responsible for the internal maintenance of the building and general running costs and overheads as well as volunteer insurance. However, as mentioned, the council do offer additional in-kind support to the grant funding and paid staff; providing public computers, a self-service machine, a printer, bookshelves, and book stock.

Relationship with Stakeholders

The library has a particularly close relationship with OC due to the amount of funding and support it receives from them, and it sees this continuing in the future. It feels this is a successful partnership, especially given the current budget pressures OC is under. It also feels that the council does not want to make any further cuts to library services in the area, but wants to reassess the ways in which they are run.

“We have meetings with the head of libraries and community librarian for Saddleworth about every 6 weeks to two months. It’s a good relationship, I think the Head of Libraries wants Delph to continue and we want Delph to continue and although I think Oldham are strapped for cash, there is a general feeling they don’t want to close any more libraries, but they might want to look at the ways they’re run. I think at the moment [our relationship] will continue”

(Delph Library representative)

User profile

Delph library considers the majority of its users are local to the area, with some users potentially coming from further afield if they work in the village or nearby. With a relatively even gender split, most are retired - although the library does also attract young parents with their children who are often below school age. Although the library cannot comment on the exact number of registered users at the library as it remains part of the county’s network, the number of visitors has remained approximately the same over the last year. The library is, however, considering ways to increase numbers, such as starting a regular craft session. It currently has ad-hoc craft sessions, but it would like a more permanent fixture in order to attract more visitors, bring the community together, and tackle isolation.

“What we’re hoping to do shortly is to start a regular craft session on a Tuesday afternoon which we hope the older people who are perhaps retired will come to. We’ve someone who runs sessions every now and then and they’re very popular so we want to try and tap into that. The person who runs them is very creative and has the philosophy that everybody can do something, and that it’s a fulfilling thing to make something, and a good place for those who may not have many friends or relatives”

(Delph Library representative)

Delph Library believes that having volunteers and staff who are helpful, provide good customer service, and who work well with children are the most important factors in maintaining user satisfaction. When time permits, the library is also keen for volunteers and staff to chat to individual users and recommend books. Moreover, the library feels

that recent improvements to the physical appearance of the library have encouraged more visitors.

[The library assistant] is very good with customer service and she's very good with children and children like coming. She's got to know a lot of people and is good at remembering people's names. I think it makes users feel they've had a good experience at the library. If there are not too many people in, there's a possibility of talking about what books they're reading and recommending other books and generally having a chat"

(Delph Library representative)

Library Volunteers and Staff

Currently, Delph Library has around 30 volunteers in addition to the library assistant who is funded by OC. The majority of volunteers are over the age of 60, however the library has also engaged with five 25-59 year olds, and two 16-24 year olds. Each shift requires one volunteer and the library assistant. Over the last year volunteers at the library have increased, however in general, over the last three years numbers have fluctuated. The library feels that this could be due to the introduction of the paid library assistant, as some volunteers were unhappy because they would no longer have the social aspect of working with other volunteers.

Looking to the future, the library aims to maintain the number of volunteers it currently has, which is enough to cover all of the opening hours. Furthermore, although Delph Library does not feel it needs any more paid staff help, it recognises that running the library without any professional support would be particularly difficult.

"I don't think you could justify having more than one paid member of staff. We're very lucky to have one. We would fight against reducing this. If we lost our paid staff, we really would be in difficulty"

(Delph Library representative)

The library reports that the greatest challenge in managing volunteers is ensuring that paid staff and volunteers work well together. Moreover, the library acknowledges that some volunteers are not as proactive as others, so it is important to find tasks each

can do. However, in terms of maintaining volunteer satisfaction, the library always makes sure that volunteers feel their contribution is worthwhile.

“I think they feel they’re doing a useful job, that it’s a friendly place appreciated by users and that because it’s a village [volunteers] know people who come in, and I think they feel they’re providing a service people appreciate. Because I do the rota I do try to see them and have chat, and we have a Christmas get-together, and I suppose if people want to have a moan about something they can do. I always thank them when they finish their shift and think they feel what they’re doing is worthwhile”

(Delph Library representative)

Although Delph Library offers volunteers an informal induction to the building, duties and policies, it does not feel that volunteers require any further training. The paid library assistant has undertaken a comprehensive training package with OC and as such has taken the lead role in the delivery of library services. Therefore, as the library assistant is present for all opening hours, there are very few gaps in expertise. Volunteers currently do not have access to the library management system. This is partly because of confidentiality of user information and partly because of the time lag between volunteer shifts making it difficult to provide training.

“We tried to get volunteers trained on the library management system but it didn’t work; most volunteers come fortnightly and by the time you’ve not done it for a fortnight you’ve forgotten all about it, so that really didn’t work very well”

(Delph Library representative)

The library assistant is willing to provide volunteers with IT training but take up has been minimal to date.

Service Delivery

Delph Library offer the following range of core services:

- Book loans

- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Library service for schools including hosting class visits
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

Additionally, the library offer the following enhanced services:

- Digital skills classes or training
- Reading groups
- Parent and baby groups, e.g. Rhyme time
- Community events

The library considers the most successful aspects of the services it delivers to be those related to children, such as Rhyme Time and school visits. Historically, the library has had a good working relationship with the local primary school, and staff from the local day nursery also visit the library to take out and exchange books for the children.

Delph Library feels that it is an “asset to the village”, being a central, friendly place where people can have meetings and bring the community together. Indeed, the library believes that when users see volunteers who they know involved in running the library, it makes it a more friendly place. However, the library believes that accessibility issues with their building limit what they can provide and to whom.

“One of our big problems is that [the library] isn’t really accessible. It sits between two roads and there are steps down on both sides. I think one of the reasons the local authority wanted to get rid of the library was because they could not see a way of making it accessible without spending fantastic amounts of money. But to be fair, those people who have mobility problems and people with prams still manage to get in”

(Delph Library representative)

Nevertheless, the library wishes to engage older people, for example, through the introduction of craft groups as mentioned above.

Sustainability

Over the last three years, funding and in-kind support from OC has remained the same and the library hopes that both forms of support will be sustained. However, it believes that support is unlikely to increase, but that it would be warned if it were to decrease. One of the library's main concerns is if the council were to take away the provision of the library assistant.

“I think they’ll try very hard to keep it the same, but the danger is perhaps with the library assistant as they might want her to do different things as well as it’s only half of her job anyway”

(Delph Library representative)

Income generation and fundraising is currently organised by DCA who undertake a number of different projects, with the library being one of them. Over the previous three years this has remained approximately the same, with the library receiving around £2,500 a year from donations and fundraising by DCA. However, a local retailer has recently chosen DCA as a beneficiary of its charitable giving, specifically to help improve Delph's Chapel Garden. Therefore, any money raised by DCA from other events could go towards the library. In addition to this income, OC also organise an annual literary event in the theatre above the library, with any profit going directly to it; this raises round £100 a night.

The library perceives parent and baby groups to be the greatest contributors to future sustainability, as not only are they well attended and encourage young children to read but they also lead to other groups being formed.

“I think Rhyme time, although it’s variable, it is well attended. An offshoot of that is one of the mothers with 2 young babies who is a keen reader, has started a reading group for young mums. It’s great because children are our users of the future aren’t they? If you can get them young and interest them then they will come when they’re older or bring their children and it will instil a love of libraries”

(Delph Library representative)

Although Delph Library is “confident” that income from DCA will continue, it believes it has enough support from local people who want the library to remain open to ensure that the library will continue to thrive. However, it does recognise potential barriers, such as DCA ceasing, or less income from fundraising because of the economic climate. However, it does not envisage this happening in the near future. Delph Library is neutral with regards to the importance of alternative sources of income and support, other than what is provided by OC and DCA. Although it can never be completely sure that OC will continue to support it, if support was withdrawn, it is confident that it would be fore-warned and would make plans to deal with the situation.

Furthermore, the library feels somewhat uncomfortable with commercial income raising activity as it does not perceive library services to be commercial activities. It also feels restricted by the amount of physical space it has available to run income generating events.

“I don’t see libraries as a commercial place. The library is small and that’s one of the constraining things; if we had more room we could do more, but I feel one more stream of activity might be beyond us really”

(Delph Library representative)

Future Direction and Support

The library sees the current amount of space available at the library as a barrier to its growth. It does recognise, however, that there is potential to expand within the building, providing more room to offer additional activities alongside core services. However, any expansion would require funding

“The fact we’re within another building means there is potential for expanding the floor space. There was a big application for quite a lot of funding for a scheme where we could open up into the green room of the theatre, but we didn’t get it. If we could have another room we could do other things whilst the library was running. At the moment we do rhyme time whilst library is running, but we could do things like the craft sessions, but as it is we’ll have to do it in a small space”

(Delph Library representative)

The library acknowledges that the library assistant has already improved the layout of the space it has, but there is potentially more it could do without funding to make it easier to run additional activities.

Delph library maintain that it is well supported by the local authority and is kept up-to-date with any new developments. Therefore, it does not feel any further local or national support is urgently needed. From looking at literature published by the Libraries Taskforce, Delph Library feel that it is doing well in terms of the support it receives and feels privileged to be able to have a library assistant paid for by the local authority as other community libraries have to share library assistants.

“If [transitioning to a community library] was happening now to a library, the model which we’ve managed to negotiate is a good one; having the library assistant there permanently”

(Delph Library representative)

Overall, the library is reasonably confident in its sustainability for the future.

“I think we’re as confident as one can be. The model is fine. Of course it does depend on the individual people including the volunteers, the library assistant and the head of libraries – they all move and change. I think it’s important to have a proper service level agreement between, in our case, the community association and Oldham libraries”

(Delph Library representative)

Case Study 9: Mitcheldean Library, South West

Background

With a population of just under 3000, Mitcheldean is a small town based in the east of Gloucestershire. In 2012, in order to make savings, Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) library service announced that it would be 'restricting' the main library service network, either by closing a number of libraries or offering them to be run by the community. For Mitcheldean Library, public meetings were held in the area and it became apparent that there was considerable support in the community to keep the library open. GL17 Community Hub Ltd (GL17), a cooperative set up as a Community Interest Company (CIC), took over the running of the library in December 2012.

Finance

GL17 is a member organisation comprising 80 members paying a subscription. It is operated by a board of six members voted in by the membership. Each board member has an area of focus - for example, commercial activity, human resources, and finances - but most decisions are made collectively at board meetings. The library also receives an annual grant of £10,000 from GCC towards running costs.

Other support

GCC provided Mitcheldean library with a 15 year lease on its building. The library does not currently pay business rates, but it is responsible for the building maintenance. It remains part of the GCC network of libraries and offers the same services as any other public library under GCC; however it is run entirely by volunteers.

Relationship with Stakeholders

The library considers it has a good working relationship with GCC. This is facilitated by a board member who is a county councillor and has access to GCC that other community libraries may not. It believes that GCC is eager for the library to succeed so it can continue saving money:

“I think the relationship is good. The local authority wanted to make sure the community library succeeded. They needed to reduce funding, whilst sustaining the library service they provided, as they didn’t have the funds to continue the way they were. To give you a ball park, I think the running costs of this library were about £80,000 or £90,000 in staff costs and clearly if you reduce that to a £10,000 contribution and pass on the maintenance and other expenses such as heating, they are saving probably something in the 90% range”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

GCC provides the support of a specialist/paid librarian who acts as the conduit between the council and community libraries. This librarian visits the library at least every fortnight, which it finds particularly useful. Public library staff are also very supportive. For example, when volunteers have technical problems, they contact the main library service and receive helpful advice. GCC maintain the public computers in the library, which are still part of the county council network, and having this support is of great importance to the library.

When first opened, Mitcheldean library requested support for property maintenance, as although it understood its responsibilities around delivering library services, it was unaware of the amount of health and safety, fire security and other obligations that needed to be undertaken in a public building. As a result, GCC is now more engaged and understands the different types of support it needs to provide.

The library envisages the relationship with GCC will continue working well. The council has committed to funding it for the next four years to 2021 at least. However, the library does anticipate further resourcing pressures within the council, which means it could face challenges in the future. Therefore, it is trying to get itself into a position where it can become more independent if required.

User profile

As Mitcheldean Library is part of the GCC library network, the number of users at the library cannot be separated from those who use other libraries within the network. The library is able to join up new members directly and reports that, due to an influx of additional housing in the area, new user numbers have increased:

“Signing up new users has been quite healthy, the area has seen additional housing, and people are moving to the area and many of those people are coming to the library and joining it. Many of them have children, and we’re a community that has a good school, primary and secondary school, so in that sense it’s attractive to people who have children and therefore they seek out the library”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

Mitcheldean library attracts a range of users; most are children up to the age of 11, with their parents and grandparents. It has a good relationship with the local primary school and organisations such as the Scouts, where it encourages periodic visits. In addition events such as children’s poetry competitions, which the library has been running for around four years, bring in users from further afield.

The library tends not to attract many users of secondary school age, perhaps due to a combination of good libraries within secondary schools and young people of that age being more engaged with social media and technology rather than books.

Although it reports that more women borrow adult fiction books, it maintains that it attracts “*quite a few*” men, most over the age of 50. The library believes older users are attracted to it because of the social connections people make through groups run by the library, for example the gardening and chess clubs.

To maintain user satisfaction, Mitcheldean Library ensures that existing visitors are able to access new resources on a continuous basis:

“For users we’ve already got, they’re looking for a refreshed experience, they want to see new books, new things for sale, they want the latest type of coffee, the most interesting newspapers. If you don’t do that, you’re tired, out of date and nobody wants you. If you’re able to get these things everywhere, why shouldn’t you in the library? The fact it doesn’t cost you anything doesn’t come into it, you just don’t want something that doesn’t hit that standard”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

Library Volunteers and Staff

The library currently has 34 registered volunteers, most over the age of 60. Over the last three years, the number of volunteers has increased slightly, which the library believes is because it has made volunteering a pleasant activity, which encourages volunteers to join. The library comments on how it always needs new volunteers to sustain the current level of support, however, having a much larger volunteer group could be difficult to manage and sustain, and volunteers may “*slide away because they feel they’re not part of it*”.

The library provides a comprehensive training package which covers health and safety, information/database control, use of internet resources, data protection, security, and training on the library management system. However, it feels that providing opportunities such as a qualification in library management would be of greatest interest to volunteers:

A route to enable people to do a qualification in library management would sustain volunteers because they would feel attached to us and might feel confident enough in taking on specific roles. For some that would be a way of growing their voluntary role into something more. They might want to do some study which would allow them to be proficient and a professional in it, so why shouldn’t we allow people to develop their expertise just because it’s voluntary?

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

The library feels its greatest challenge relates to managing volunteer personalities, with clashes sometimes occurring that increases the risk of volunteers leaving. However, it believes that the “*tug of doing it for a good purpose will bring people back*”. Furthermore, in order to maintain volunteer satisfaction, it tries to ensure that volunteers feel that what they are doing is worthwhile and valued:

“The one thing you have with a volunteer is if you don’t like it you can just walk away, there’s no consequence so you do have a sense of having to keep the team happy; they like to think that what they are doing is worthwhile and valued”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

Service Delivery

Mitcheldean Library offer the following range of core services:

- Book loans
- Newspapers/magazines available in library
- Inter-library loan service
- National programmes e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, Quick Reads, Books on Prescription
- DVD/CD loans
- Photocopying/printing
- Wi-Fi
- Computer access

Additionally, the library offer the following enhanced services:

- Laptop or tablet loan
- Digital Skills classes/ training
- Health groups e.g. Macmillan cancer support or dementia/carers
- Creative groups
- Reading groups
- Parent and baby groups e.g. rhyme time
- E-book loans
- E-magazines/ newspapers
- Local History Archive
- Community events
- Café
- Shop
- Document laminating
- Meeting room/ work space hire
- Exhibition areas
- Community noticeboard
- Author and poet events
- Chess club
- 1-2-1 IT support
- Book sale
- Greeting card/ stationery sale

The library perceives the wide range of up-to-date adult fiction books it offers to be the most successful aspect of the services it delivers. Moreover, it is particularly proud of simply keeping the library open every day. To improve its current service, the library would like to expand its reach into the community. The library notes that a “*professional*

campaign to encourage people to use libraries” would be particularly helpful as it believes library resources are not fully known about and understood.

A less tangible benefit of running a CL highlighted by the library is the development of community leaders amongst the volunteers:

“I think one of the benefits of having 30 volunteers, is that they become community leaders in their own right. I think we’ve raised the bar because a lot of those volunteers don’t just volunteer in the library, they go off and do other things such as raising funds for other charities, running concerts and putting on quiz nights. They’re the same group. The library is a core community asset in terms of providing a sense of community to the village”.

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

Sustainability

Mitcheldean Library receives an annual grant from GCC of £10,000. Over the last three years, the library reports that income received through direct trading and retail has generally increased. The library sells greetings cards, office stationery, and refreshments. One of the library’s most profitable lines has been the sale of USB sticks. It hires out space to groups and organisations, and although revenue through this has remained largely static over the last three years, it does see it as an area which it wants to develop:

“The only area that does well is hiring out space which is growing because more groups tend to like it for a venue for doing things and we also [hire out space] to an estate agent as it’s just the right size for him to bring his staff in for a staff meeting – so that’s an opportunity we see for growing income”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

It also receives some income through donations. When initially started, it received a one-off contribution of £500; however the majority of current donations are small and from members of the community who want to see the library remain open. Events such as Christmas markets (where the library charges for the use of tables and stalls), computer clubs, and author evenings also contribute to income generation.

The library has plans to increase the number of income generating activities. For instance, it has submitted a bid for funding to set up a business hub to provide office space and video conferencing facilities for small businesses requiring appropriate premises.

The library perceives the barrier to securing such income lies in the availability of volunteers to deliver income generating activities - it believes that some volunteers may see other volunteering opportunities, such as social care, as more important than supporting library services.

The library rates alternative sources of income and support, other than that provided by the council, as *“very important”*. Although it receives the majority of its funding from GCC, it is continually looking for ways to ensure it remains sustainable if funding sources were to change:

“One of the things we’re trying to do as a community library is get ourselves in a position where we can become more independent if we need to. I think a bigger challenge facing everybody is whether there is a need for libraries down the road if everything’s gone digital? It isn’t just about books, people come into the library to socialise, to read newspapers, to do community activities and they may also come in to use computers. So if we can keep our purpose, we’ll always get our funding”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)

It also believes that if it maintains a mix of sources, *“if something goes wrong with one, [we] will still have others”* to fall back on. As such, it is “reasonably comfortable” with developing enterprising activities. However, successfully developing these is dependent on having volunteers who are interested in generating income, and the library reports that around two thirds of its volunteers would prefer to focus on the general running of the library rather than generating income.

Future Direction and Support

The library is currently four years into its 15 year lease, and so certainty over its location is secure. Over the next four years, until 2021, the £10,000 annual grant from GCC will remain the same; however after this point the library believes this figure could potentially change and that support would only be available for specific needs.

The library perceives the main barriers to growth to be funding opportunities and volunteer availability and capability to undertake income generating activities. To tackle these barriers, it is developing plans to increase the number of income generating activities. However, it notes that most volunteers prefer to take part in activities which have already been established, rather than developing new opportunities. It sees this as an area for potential training, and highlights that support is perhaps needed for volunteers to become more creative in developing new services. To support income generation further, it also highlights the need for volunteers with business expertise and other similar skillsets.

Overall, Mitcheldean Library is very confident in its future sustainability:

“I don’t see any threat. At the moment I think we’re growing in our ability, so unless something was to come along and hit us sideways I don’t see anything stopping us”

(Mitcheldean Community Library representative)