

Community Libraries – Checklist for Early Considerations

The following checklist indicates some of the key issues that need to be considered by communities when thinking about taking on a role in supporting delivery of public library services in Kirklees.

Emerging organisations and community groups are not expected to be able to address all of these at this stage. The questions are designed to help identify areas where further support or consideration may be required. Organisations that seek to work with the Council on proposals for supporting libraries will be able to access additional support to address some of these issues in due course.

Organisational Development

This section is designed to prompt thinking about organisational issues that should be considered early on.

<p>Is there a formal group in existence with a written governing document? The local authority and most funders will only be able to work with structured organisations to develop community libraries. Informal groups could consider setting up a new group or working in partnership with other existing groups. An organisations objectives should relate in some way to the management of a library services if it is to manage one.</p>	
<p>Is the group well known and supported by the community? Demonstrating widespread community support will be critical to the success of any community library project. Talking to other local community organisations early on may reveal opportunities for collaborative working. Groups will need to consult and engage with local residents to build their membership, and test demand for any proposals to delivery services differently. Before doing so, groups should establish what consultations have, and are already taking place to build on information that is already available. Building up a list of supporters will be helpful to develop and deliver your aspirations and allow you to engage with and make the most of what the local community can contribute. Use of social media such as Facebook groups can play an important role in this.</p>	
<p>Has the group considered how appropriate its legal structure and governing document are to take on a library service? Organisations have to consider what the most suitable legal form is for their group as well as whether or not to register as a charity. An overview of legal forms for community organisations can be found here: http://www.uk.coop/simplylegal. Please note however that some recent legislation affecting Cooperative Society Law means that some of the references to IPS's and Cooperatives are no longer relevant</p> <p>There is also specific guidance in relation to libraries and charitable status available here: http://libraries.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/sites/default/files/libraries_applying_to_register_as_charities_revised.pdf</p>	
<p>Does the group have appropriate policies and procedures in place? Policies and procedures will help ensure legal compliance and demonstrate credibility with others. Some relevant policies include: Data Protection, Health and Safety, Child Protection, Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults, and Equal Opportunities. Whilst not a priority at the early stages of development, an awareness of these issues is helpful for all community organisations.</p>	

<p>Is the organisation clear whether it intends to employ staff or run on a purely volunteer basis? If seeking to employ staff, advice should be sought regarding the legal implications of this. The relationship between paid staff and volunteer roles needs to be carefully considered.</p>	
<p>Has consideration been given to training staff and volunteers? Is there a plan to up skill the group in relation to the project?</p>	
<p>Does the organisation have relationships with the people and organisations it needs to make a success of the project? Positive relationships with the local authority, other community organisations and voluntary sector groups, other public agencies, local councillors, and local businesses are all important in making a success of your project. A simple “stakeholder analysis” is a way of identifying who you need to talk to, and should be considered early on.</p>	

Developing the services and understanding the business model

This section is designed to prompt thinking about how the service might work, and help organisations to determine whether or not it may be viable for them to take on a service.

<p>Is the organisation clear whether or not the service provided will form part of the local authority’s statutory provision? Services that make up the local authorities statutory library provision need to comply with specific standards. These are described in the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964. Kirklees Council is particularly interested in working with communities who can support them to deliver statutory library services.</p>	
<p>Is the organisation clear to what extent the service will be supported and integrated with the local authorities’ Library Management System and Book Stocking services? Community managed libraries can be linked to the local authorities services to varying degrees. This can range from full integration to library systems and book stock to total independence. The latter requires the organisation to source its own books and manage its own system for lending. Understanding this is critical to developing an appropriate operating model for the library. Kirklees council are anticipating to support integration of book stock and library management system for any communities or social enterprises supporting the delivery of their statutory library services.</p>	
<p>Has the organisation identified how it can realistically generate income to sustain the service? All libraries have costs, even those that are entirely run by volunteers. Ideally a range of income streams should support any community run enterprise or service. Options may include: Service delivery contracts, direct selling of books or other products, sub letting of rooms or facilities, room hire, service charges (e.g. copy charging, printing) or complimentary enterprises such as a café or training activities. Locality has recently produced a guidance note exploring the potential for income generation in public libraries available here: http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries.pdf</p>	
<p>Can you demonstrate there is a market and demand for any proposed services? Market research and feasibility studies should ideally be carried out before launching any services. Before taking on any new venture, the management of the organisation should be confident that they are making well informed decisions about the market of any services. The council may be able to provide useful information about demand and use of existing services. This can be a useful starting point but you may need to go further and undertake some of your own research, especially if you are doing something new or seeking to get information about potentially new audiences.</p>	

<p>Has the group considered colocation with other services or organisations? Basing a library service with other community services has the potential to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and provide a more sustainable model for some community libraries. Organisations should explore opportunities for hosting library services alongside other services and consider their projects in the context of other local community buildings and services. Some organisations have successfully combined library services with advice centres, education and training facilities, heritage centres, café's, shops and even pubs!</p>	
<p>Does the organisation have an appropriate business plan? A business plan needn't be an overly complex document, but a written business plan covering the following sections will be important in establishing a clear and shared vision for the development of your project which should be useful both internally, and externally (e.g. raising money!). Things to include are: Information about your organisation, Project objectives, Market Information (demonstrating need), Promotion, Resources, Risk Assessment, Income and Expenditure (projections). Any business plan must be owned and understood by those involved with your group or organisation.</p>	
<p>Does the organisation understand likely cash flow? Predicting cash flow isn't an exact science, but it is an important part of business planning. All income and expenditure should be considered, and projections should be grounded in reality, i.e. based on previous figures, or benchmarked against other similar organisations where possible.</p> <p>One place you can look at case studies, and benchmark against is http://libraries.communityknowledgehub.org.uk/case-studies</p>	

Finance:

<p>Has the organisation considered how it is going to finance the project? Funding and resources will be required throughout the cycle of the project and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development: Research and feasibility, professional fees. • Start up: Capital equipment costs, refurbishment. • Ongoing: Revenue costs to cover all costs relating to the service, maintenance, rent, utilities etc. <p>Organisations should consider all options in terms of resourcing and financing the project. Typically, this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Finance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grants and Donations ○ Loans ○ Equity finance e.g. Community Shares (see http://communityshares.org.uk/find-out-more/what-are-community-shares) • Running Costs / Revenue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Service Level Agreement or contracts ○ Sales ○ Grants ○ Donations ○ Subscriptions ○ Rents ○ Fees and charges for services ○ Fundraising events, Raffles ○ Sponsorship ○ In-kind support (e.g. time and donations of equipment) 	
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Measuring community benefit

<p>Is the organisation clear what it is trying to achieve, and how it will measure success? Demonstrating your success and value to the community will be important in sustaining any services in the long term. Monitoring and review systems need to be considered from the beginning to enable the right information to be collected and used effectively to prove the value of what you do. This should not just be about number of books lent, but other positive outcomes for the community too, such as social inclusion and learning opportunities. Communities need to think about the purpose for supporting libraries, what are the existing and potential benefits a thriving library can or does bring to local people? Preservation of an existing service will not be sufficient argument to attract investment from others.</p> <p>The Carnegie Trust recently produced a publication on the Wellbeing impacts of libraries you can view here: http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/250ba850-1bca-4038-8bc3-070f20ef23d2/Speaking-Volumes.aspx</p>	
<p>Does the organisation understand what the local authority and others expect in terms of monitoring? Organisations receiving funding or support to run services are likely to be expected to monitor specific things. Systems should make capturing information easy, in a way that can easily be collated into reports if required. Key performance indicators may include measures such as; Number of book loans; Number of visitors; User satisfaction; or Opening hours.</p>	
<p>Is the organisation clear in articulating their intended aims and impact to other stakeholders? A clear and common understanding within the organisation, and common approach to communicating your interest in the library service will help your organisation establish credibility. Developing a strategy with a clear Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives is a useful exercise for any organisation to bring clarity of purpose and help drive the realisation of a common purpose for those involved.</p>	

Asset Issues

All library services need a place to operate from. This section is intended to prompt thinking on building related issues.

<p>Is the organisation clear where the library service will be run from? The existing library building may not be the most suitable from which to run a transformed library service. Consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate place to run the service from. Considerations include: Local demand, Condition, Costs, Maintenance, Layout, Design issues, Ownership, Flexibility, Health and Safety.</p>	
<p>Is the organisation clear what its stake in the asset should be? Community organisations can occupy premises on very different terms. This could include relatively informal licences to occupy and use space through to long term leases or freehold ownership. There are pro's and con's to all options, with varying levels of control and flexibility. An understanding of the differences will help organisations to make informed choices about what is best for them.</p> <p>Kirklees Council have a Community Asset Transfer policy which may be relevant where communities have a strong case for taking over the ownership of existing council owned libraries. http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/yourneighbourhood/communityAssetTransfer.aspx</p>	

<p>Is legal support required? If an organisation is seeking to secure a lease or take on an asset on a freehold basis specialist legal advice is highly recommended, if not essential before committing to any agreement.</p>	
<p>Is the organisation clear about its maintenance liabilities and how costs will be met? If the organisation is taking on responsibility for a building, a survey to identify required works and maintenance costs is strongly recommended. Consideration needs to be given to not only immediate works, but also ongoing costs and cyclical maintenance to ensure that periodic replacements and repairs are budgeted for. Locality offer a brokerage service to put community organisations in touch with building professionals. Further information is available at: www.localitybrokers.org.uk</p>	