



Response to Empower, Inform, Enrich – The modernisation of public libraries

26th January 2010



Sgiliau i Broffesiynolion Dysgu



Skills for Learning Professionals

Introduction

Lifelong Learning UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation which pertains to publicly funded libraries in England.

We are responding as the Sector Skills Council for the Lifelong Learning Sector, which includes the whole publicly funded libraries workforce across the UK.

We have responded to the questions and issues raised that have specific or potential workforce implications for the libraries, archives and information services sector. We have been unable to respond on issues beyond this remit.

Excellent library services are dependent on having excellent people working in them. We believe there needs to be continued investment in the libraries workforce to ensure it remains appropriately skilled in order to be responsive and to facilitate the continued development of library services as outlined in the consultation document. Although the essays presented in the consultation document do not focus specifically on developing the libraries workforce, there is continual reference to an appropriate 'skills mix' for library services.

In response to this, we propose that the Public Library Skills Mix Diagram (appendix a) is adopted and taken forward in addressing the skills needs of the library profession. We also believe that this should be owned by sector partners and employers. The Public Library Skills Mix Diagram which is included with this response was developed by the Lifelong Learning UK representative on the Workforce Task Group convened by DCMS during the initial stages of the Modernisation Review, in collaboration with other task group members. We are however aware that this is a constantly evolving piece of work that reflects the continually changing requirements of the library workforce. As such, there are particular issues that may now need to be added, for example, recognition of equality issues including equality impact assessments for service change and transformation.

Our response to the consultation

Role for libraries

Q1. Does every library authority have to share a common purpose? Are these purposes complementary and relevant? Are some more important than others? Are there other purposes we should consider?

National and local leadership

Q2. Do you think the current roles as defined for central and local government are still appropriate? Is the 1964 legislative framework still appropriate or does it need review? If so what changes would you like to see? Is there any value on central government having a more direct role in setting the vision and objectives for the library service or is the service better managed entirely at local level?

Q3. Could (a) central government departments, and (b) local authorities better use the public library service to communicate initiatives and contribute to other public services? Do you have any ideas on how this might work?

Comment:

We believe that there is opportunity for (a) central government departments, and (b) local authorities to make effective use of the skills of the libraries workforce to communicate initiatives and to contribute to other public services and understand that this is already happening to a certain extent. People working in libraries have a varied skills mix, which includes a variety of transferable skills beyond what is seen as 'traditional' library skills. The Public Library Skills Mix Diagram (appendix a) provides an illustration of how 'traditional' library skills have been enhanced to address the changing demands of library services and their users. This enables library staff to work effectively across departments and services, for example, as providers of health information, skills development and careers advice, services to families and young children, business support, ICT training, archives, and so on; with skills in advocacy, marketing and in partnership and collaborative working.

Organisational structures, governance and funding

- Q4. A recent report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Libraries, Literacy and Information Management concluded that central government structures complicate the delivery of library funding and policy. The report also called into question the suitability of the MLA and ACL and recommended a Library Development Agency.**
- Are there benefits in changing the structures in government?
 - Are there benefits in changing the structures or roles of public bodies?
 - Is there a value in greater central function around particular issues? E.g. marketing and publicity, digital services?
 - Do you see any benefit in establishing new national /local structures as set out in Margaret Hodge's essay?

Comment:

As Lifelong Learning UK's focus in this response is specifically on workforce issues, this is not within our remit. However, we would like to state that if government and/or governance structures were to change then this would potentially have an impact on the libraries workforce, particularly at leadership and management level. Consequently, there would be a need to ensure that the workforce is appropriately skilled and that opportunities for the workforce to become appropriately skilled are available.

Lifelong Learning UK can also see the potential for an increased central function to support skills development and CPD. We believe there could be efficiency benefits in addressing the training needs of staff, especially in small local authorities, on a more collaborative basis, and increased opportunities for cross-authority learning. Staff in public libraries have tended to stay within an individual service for quite a long while and we can see further potential benefits in terms of the cross-fertilisation of ideas and external stimuli to prompt further development.

- Q5. In 2007 the Department for Communities and Local Government published Developing the Local Government Services Market: New ways of working and new models of provision within the public library service but only a handful of local authorities currently deliver libraries through a trust or private company. The case studies show that alternative delivery models can be effective so how might we best encourage local authorities to explore the opportunities they offer? What other governance models might be suitable for library services or are there barriers to introducing these models? For instance:**
- What could libraries learn from other sectors including the private sector?
 - Would other models of delivery and funding – e.g. the academy model for schools, social enterprise models or Foundation Trusts for hospitals – be appropriate for library services?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK recognises that local authorities will want to explore alternative delivery models while acknowledging further implications for workforce skills. For new models to succeed, managers and leaders in particular will need to develop skills around entrepreneurialism, evaluating risk and return, and change management.

The Lifelong Learning UK LAIS (Libraries, Archives and Information Services) Constituency Panel recently identified the following implications for workforce skills of the introduction of these different governance and delivery models:

- To find large sums of money through fundraising, creating trusts and funds and to do so through new business models, strategically directed by service directors;
- The ability to write a good specification, to manage contracts, understand and monitor performance indicators;
- A need for a strong strategic management within libraries to ensure that public service activities were not overtaken by income generation considerations;
- For libraries to be able to spot the potential for commercial activities and exploit them;
- Understanding financial regulations.

Lifelong Learning UK is interested in exploring what libraries can learn from other sectors, particularly beyond the lifelong learning sector, and also what public libraries can learn from others such as those in Higher Education. Lifelong Learning UK are in the early stages of data gathering and analysis, and would like to monitor such cross-sector working and alternative delivery models in the future.

Q6. How can we prioritise investment in libraries, especially at a time of financial constraints? You may like to consider:

- **How we might ensure that all libraries are able to develop successful funding models which are based on a diversity of funding streams.**
- **How could we help open new and more revenue streams for libraries?**
- **What could libraries learn from other sectors?**
- **How do we effectively spread best practice?**

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK has created and continues to develop structures and standards to enable libraries, archives and information services to learn from the broader lifelong learning sector. Furthermore, Lifelong Learning UK draws on good practice across libraries and information services both within and beyond the lifelong learning sector. Lifelong Learning UK is also well-placed in terms of disseminating and sharing good practice within the broader lifelong learning sector in particular, and the National Occupational Standards and qualifications projects that are underway will contribute to ensuring that the workforce are able to respond and adapt to the current economic climate.

As stated earlier in Q5, Lifelong Learning UK believes that it is essential that in the current climate workforce skills are developed in such areas as:

- Income generation to support fundraising, the creation of trusts and funds;
- The ability to write good specifications, to manage contracts, understand and monitor performance indicators;
- Strong strategic management within libraries to ensure that public service activities are not overtaken by income generation considerations;
- Being able to spot the potential for commercial activities and exploit them;
- Gaining capital contributions, e.g. from property deals or from the growth agenda;
- Understanding financial regulations.

Digital

- Q7. Digital Services: What is the future of library services in a digital environment? What changes do you envisage as a result of changes in technology over the next 5-10 years? You might like to consider:**
- **How can we use the digital revolution to extend access to library resources?**
 - **Should virtual lending (i.e. lending downloads to the home via the internet) be the future of the public library service either generally or in some areas? What challenges would virtual lending present?**
 - **What digital content should libraries provide? For example should all libraries make subscription online services available to users? Should this be a free service?**
 - **Web 2.0 enables people and communities to contribute web content? Do you think that there is a role for libraries in Web 2.0? If so, what?**
 - **Is there other content or technology which you think should be guaranteed to users?**
 - **How can libraries support the Digital Inclusion agenda? What are some of the potential obstacles to greater digital engagement within libraries, and how might these be overcome?**
 - **What other opportunities does new technology present for libraries? Do you have ideas for innovative ways in which new technology could be applied in local libraries?**

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK welcomes the sector embracing new technologies with enthusiasm and notes that there are many excellent ideas being generated and brought into action throughout libraries. Alongside the development of new technologies and the new and/or adapted services the technologies generate, it is important to recognise that this has an impact on the skills needs of staff in libraries. We see a “potential obstacle” in not having appropriately trained staff in a sphere which is continuously evolving and thus requiring the regular updating of skills, and we also see a significant need to get library staff enthused with technology and the technology-enabled services that their library offers in order to pass that enthusiasm on to users.

Libraries have always been at the forefront of technological change with the introduction of the People’s Network up to now. Investment in training for staff must keep up with the pace of change.

It is easy to see technology as a panacea for many things but it is important that libraries keep their focus on the needs of their users. As such, virtual lending should only be pursued where there is a genuine demand for it. In some places it may be more appropriate to run more events around digital inclusion. Many members of the public know that libraries are one of the only places that one can access the internet for free. This trust in the local library as a ‘safe space’ for informal learning should be capitalised upon.

Many library staff have embraced web 2.0 technologies creating Facebook pages and Twitter channels. There will be a need, however, to expose those staff not yet engaged to the possibilities of new technologies and to train them in their use. What will be important is that librarians’ primary focus should be on the library users and local community. Librarians will need to be trained to identify those technologies which can liberate, inspire and enthuse and create an even better library experience.

New technologies also provide great opportunities for librarians to be part of an online community of practice and engage in professional development through accessing online courses or simply an expert who may be on the other side of the world. We would like to see all library staff encouraged to access professional development using new technologies.

The use of new technologies, particularly web 2.0 tools such as Facebook and Twitter, is related to leadership and management in library services. It is important that leaders and managers in library services are also trained and made aware of the positive use that can be made of web 2.0. Without strong leadership support, enthusiastic staff further down in the organisation can become frustrated.

A further consideration noted by our stakeholders is that even medium sized authorities can struggle to make all of the resources available and to be active on all of these fronts though. Furthermore, and with reference to Q5, it was also noted that co-operation or shared delivery will enable expensive and rare expertise to be shared.

Q8. Digital technology is already helping with the back office and administrative functions of many libraries:

- **How can we spread best practice and maximise those opportunities?**
- **Self service and return technology is intended to free up library staff to deal with more complex customer enquiries. Should this technology be available in all libraries?**

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK welcomes the increased use of digital technologies in helping with back office and administrative functions. We believe that such technologies have the potential to provide library staff with more opportunities, thereby making their roles more interesting and diverse, e.g. through the development of web 2.0 services. Technologies also have the potential to free up library staff's time, enabling them to do other more varied work and to have more opportunity to attend training, events and to spend time on their professional development for example.

Q9. Do Local Authority IT strategies support or impede libraries' digital innovation? Should libraries have a national web presence? Would a national online catalogue covering all public libraries be beneficial?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK does not wish to comment specifically on whether Local Authority IT strategies support or impede digital innovation in libraries. However, we would reinforce our belief that digital innovation in libraries requires an appropriately skilled, trained and enthused workforce, and that strategies therefore need to include mechanisms for ensuring this.

What services should be available to users?

Q10. Are there any services which you consider should be prescribed across all library services or should services be entirely determined at local level? Is there any value in having a clear national 'offer to consumers of the library in the 21st century' If so which elements would be vital components? Besides hard copy books do you think there are other services which should be free at the point of delivery on a national basis?

Q11. How can we widen usage and make libraries more accessible to the public? For instance:

- **On what basis should library leaders make decisions about opening hours and location?**
- **Should library joining and membership arrangements be simplified across all libraries? Indeed should library membership be national so that citizens can use**

- any library and borrow and return material anywhere.
- Do you think there are particular services which would encourage more library use? You might wish to consider a universal home delivery service (in addition to the scheme for housebound people), and enabling people to request a book online.
- Only a third of 16-24 year olds now visit public libraries. How can we ensure that young people who leave full time education remain library users?
- How can we improve our understanding of the people who use libraries – and of the people who do not – in order to improve services to them?
- How might library users have a greater voice in decision making

Comment:

In terms of what services should be available to users; services can only be developed if they can be supported and delivered by an appropriately skilled workforce. Service development should therefore happen in tandem with staff development, so that new services can be supported by staff with a varied and appropriate skills mix (see the Public Library Skills Mix Diagram, appendix a). Training and professional development of the workforce is essential in order to offer the services that users want and in the manner that users want, i.e. accessibility. However, priorities need to be determined in order for effective decisions to be made on where resources should be committed and this links back to what national expectations can be realised.

Many library staff already have well developed skills enabling them to work effectively with young people, and Lifelong Learning UK welcomes initiatives (e.g. those led by MLA) which are supporting the cross-fertilisation of skills between the youth work and public library sectors. Other recent initiatives, such as the Big Lottery Fund's Community Libraries Programme, have stimulated the development of skills in areas such as community engagement. However, we believe that there is still a need to build on and enhance the skills of the workforce in this area to enable them to further reach out to communities most in need of their services and to engage them in decision making. This is acknowledged in Lifelong Learning UK's current work on the development of appropriate and relevant vocational qualifications for the sector.

In order to improve our understanding of library users and non-users and therefore improve the services we offer, greater analysis of the data already in existence is needed. Lifelong Learning UK among many other bodies (e.g. MLA, The Reading Agency, local authorities, and so on) collect, use and disseminate labour market intelligence data. We believe there is a significant need for greater analysis of the data already in existence in partnership between these organisations. We would therefore like to see greater sharing, co-operation and use of labour market intelligence data to provide a more co-ordinated and focused approach to service development in the sector.

Q12. Do we do enough to market library services? If not, what more could/should be done to promote or explain the benefits of libraries?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK believes that more can be done in terms of up-skilling the workforce in terms of marketing and promoting libraries and their services. Furthermore, there are significant issues concerning how libraries and their services are promoted through other means beyond the control of local library staff, e.g. through the national media.

The often negative image of libraries portrayed in the media not only impacts on how the general public perceive them, and whether or not they chose to use them; it also impacts on whether or not people, especially young people, chose to work in them. There is therefore a clear need not only for more effective marketing of library services but also of the profession as a whole. Lifelong Learning UK believes that more needs to be done to bring people in to the profession in order to

sustain the libraries workforce. We believe that key agencies like the MLA and CILIP, have an important role to play in promoting the profession and would welcome the opportunity to work with them on this.

Commercial activities & partnerships

Q13. Commercial partnerships through libraries are not common. How might we bring more private funding into the public library service?

- What commercial activities should we encourage libraries to operate? (Examples of commercial activities or partnerships might be book selling or partnerships with bookshops, provision of coffee shops, rental of certain materials, contracts with local business, national partnerships with private companies?)
- What benefits do you think these might bring to the library service?
- Are there any commercial activities which you think are not appropriate for libraries to undertake?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK are not in a position to comment on how to bring more private funding in to the public library service. However, a move into commercial partnerships and private funding arrangements will potentially have skills implications for the workforce and this would need to be acknowledged and addressed – see response to Q5.

Q14. Where can libraries learn from the commercial sector and what private partnerships can you think of which have been useful for library services?

- How can we better spread good practice here?

Location and buildings

Q15. What are the circumstances in which a Local Authority would be justified in closing a library?

Q16. Co-location of libraries with other public services, schools and colleges or business is becoming increasingly prevalent. When is co-location successful and what factors should LAs consider in making co-location decisions?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK recognises definite skills benefits to the co-location of libraries with other public services, where staff are able to share resources, develop their knowledge and understanding in other areas of information and advice provision and of other public services. We also believe that potentially, this can be an effective way to market libraries, their services and the profession. At the same time, we would point out that there are skills implications for the libraries workforce when co-locating and these must be considered.

Q17. There is a mixed economy of library buildings including large central libraries, smaller local libraries and mobile libraries. What should library leaders consider in making decisions about the make-up of their library service? For instance:

- What kind of customer information should library leaders have in deciding where to locate libraries?
- How should Library leaders make decisions about library buildings' accessibility and fitness for purpose?

- **How should the library service be provided in small rural communities?**
- **Are there benefits from unstaffed mini-libraries, library machines and self service check out of books?**
- **How important is it that libraries should be housed in dedicated buildings?**

Comment:

When making decisions about the make-up of their library service and considering other models such as unstaffed mini-libraries, library machines and self service check out, library leaders need to consider the skills implications and to ensure that the service is appropriately set up, administered and maintained. Furthermore, skills in effective marketing and the creation and writing of supporting information and guidance for users (in the absence of staff) are also important.

Training, leadership and services for staff

Q18. How could we encourage a greater skill mix beyond traditional librarianship in the library service?

- **Do you think library courses have the relevant content and teach the right skills to equip the library workforce?**
- **How can we ensure that the library service attracts and nurtures leaders with the ability to drive improvement, engage in partnerships and innovate services?**
- **What other skills and/ or qualifications are required to staff a modern library?**

Comment:

- **Do you think library courses have the relevant content and teach the right skills to equip the library workforce?**

There is a time lag between new skills being needed and their being incorporated into standards, qualifications, etc. and Lifelong Learning UK and organisations like the QCDA are working together to reduce this.

Lifelong Learning UK's Sector Qualification Strategy Action Plan identifies the development of qualifications for the libraries, archives and information services sector as a critical priority. Feedback from people in the sector confirms that the existing qualifications in this area need to be reviewed. Working with an expert working group (with representation from employers and key stakeholder bodies such as CILIP), Lifelong Learning UK is addressing new skills needs by developing new vocational qualifications. The scope of the project is to consult with the sector to determine qualification requirements for the libraries, archives and information services sector across the four nations. We aim to develop new qualifications which are fit for purpose and fully supported by the sector. We are also looking at how qualifications can be used in Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, accredited short programmes and pathways to professionalism. It is intended that the new qualifications will be available from December 2010.

- **How can we ensure that the library service attracts and nurtures leaders with the ability to drive improvement, engage in partnerships and innovate services?**

There is a definite need for more effective marketing and promotion of the profession and this also includes the diverse and interesting range of skills needed in order to provide a great service. As stated earlier in Q12, there are significant issues concerning how libraries and their services are promoted through means beyond the control library staff and their leaders, e.g. through the media. Lifelong Learning UK believes that more needs to be done in order to sustain the libraries workforce and to bring people in to the profession. We believe that key

agencies like the MLA and Cilip, have an important role to play in promoting the profession and thereby, promoting libraries.

o **What other skills and/or qualifications are required to staff a modern library?**

The first combined suite of National Occupational Standards (NOS) for libraries, archives and information services and records management employers were approved in May 2008. These are due for review in 2010. Lifelong Learning UK has received funding from bodies in all four nations, including MLA for England, to develop a user guide to these National Occupational Standards which will provide guidance for HR departments and employers on their use in:

- Job descriptions
- Team structures/organizational redesign
- Continuing Professional Development
- Recruitment advertisements
- Competency Based Frameworks
- Performance management and performance development tools
- Training programmes (at the level of both the organization and the individual)

Lifelong Learning UK believe that the Public Library Skills Mix Diagram (appendix a) could be used more widely as a promotional tool for the profession and be appropriately adapted to make the profession more attractive. There should also be greater opportunities to broaden the experiences of library leaders and library staff. 'Traditional' library skills continue to be fundamental in any library service and these continue to evolve. However, there is a range of different and new skills that are required in order to deliver a great service including, among others:

- Community cohesion, engagement and empowerment
- Working with children and young people
- Business support
- Resource management
- Marketing and promotion
- Advocacy skills
- Influencing and negotiating
- Relationship building and management
- Understanding the digital environment, e.g. digitisation - how to digitise, cataloguing, access issues, copyright, training

Lifelong Learning UK's new sector qualifications research found that there are growing demands made on the existing workforce by the increasing complexity of information management and digitisation, and the potential impact of both the impending retirement of a large proportion of the workforce and the government's emphasis on skills and social inclusion.

A wide range of professionally accredited courses is available at first degree, post-graduate and master's level for those who wish to work in a professional role in the sector in England, Wales and Scotland although not in Northern Ireland. A variety of delivery modes are also available, including distance learning. Foundation degrees for this sector are a recent development, but do not yet have professional accreditation from Cilip. There are however, limited opportunities for vocational education and training specifically for the Libraries, Archives and Information Services sector for those in a support or administrative role, with no career pathway. This has led to Lifelong Learning UK's vocational qualifications project and it is intended that the new qualifications at levels 2 and 3 will be available from December 2010.

Q19. Do you think that volunteering is a useful component of the library workforce? How can we ensure that volunteering arrangements are used to best effect?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK is pleased to see volunteers being considered as part of the workforce. We see volunteering in the sector as an important means of introducing people to the profession and potentially leading to a career in libraries. Skills in the management of volunteers are essential and it is important that libraries do not see volunteers as 'getting staff on the cheap' or to replace the work of paid library staff. Furthermore, as volunteers are part of the workforce, libraries should ensure that they have access to opportunities to develop their skills and to be appropriately trained.

How should we monitor library performance and what should we aspire to?

Q20. Is it important that libraries remain a statutory obligation for local authorities?

- **What might be the advantages and disadvantages?**
- **For instance, would the removal of statute allow greater flexibility for fundraising or different modes of operation currently off limits?**

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK's focus in this response is specifically on workforce issues. Our only comment here is that should there be any change in statutory obligation then potentially there may be implications for the workforce. The potential impact on the workforce would therefore need careful consideration.

Q21. Is the obligation to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service the correct one?

- **Does it need further definition or guidance around what that means or should the interpretation be left to local authorities?**
- **For instance, should there be more prescription around opening hours, web presence, service provision, staff skill mix?**
- **Is there a need for less, more or different local or national monitoring?**
- **Are visits and books borrowed still relevant?**
- **What else should we consider and measure when determining the efficiency and effectiveness of our libraries?**
- **Would an accreditation scheme for libraries be beneficial or are there other systems which might incentivise libraries to deliver more effectively?**
- **Is the Secretary of State's power to intervene still appropriate?**

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK believes that any library service should have an appropriately varied staff skills mix (see the Public Library Skills Mix Diagram, appendix a) that can address the needs of that particular service. It is therefore the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the staff skills mix is right for the service and its users and that staff are appropriately trained and qualified. It is not within our remit to comment on whether further definition is needed or whether an accreditation scheme would be beneficial, but we would urge that, should such a scheme be adopted, the workforce issues are considered, and the level and quality of training provision included.

Q22. How should we measure performance? You might like to consider:

- Is there a need for less, more or different local or national monitoring?
- Are visits and books borrowed still relevant?
- What else should we consider and measure when determining the efficiency and effectiveness of our libraries?
- Would an accreditation scheme for libraries be beneficial or are there other systems which might incentivise libraries to deliver more effectively?
- Is the Secretary of State's power to intervene still appropriate?

Comment:

Lifelong Learning UK do not wish to comment on this in detail other than to say that we would not support any performance measurement systems or processes that would impact detrimentally on the day-to-day work of library staff.

Q23. What research do we need to do to best demonstrate the benefits of the library service to local and national leaders? Who would be best placed to initiate this research?**Comment:**

There is a significant amount of valuable already research in existence. However, Lifelong Learning UK believe that we need to make more effective use of the research that is already available and collected by both ourselves and other bodies, e.g. MLA, CILIP, The Reading Agency, The British Library, local authorities, and so on. We would like to see the bodies that conduct research in the sector working much more closely together, sharing the research and their findings, and working collaboratively to see how the research can be used more effectively. Lifelong Learning UK also feels that there is a need to look more closely at, and make better use of, international research in the libraries sector.

About Lifelong Learning UK

Lifelong Learning UK is the independent employer-led sector skills council responsible for the professional development of those working in career guidance, community learning and development, further education, higher education, libraries, archives and information services, and work based learning across the UK. We represent the interests of the 1 million+ individuals working in lifelong learning in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and are the voice of employers in this sector on skills issues.

Further information can be found on our website: www.lluk.org

If you have a query about this response please contact: sarahrudge@lluk.org

Appendix a - Public Library Skills Mix Diagram

