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Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries

Policy Guidance for Local Authorities in England

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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

One of the Government's highest priorities is to combat social exclusion. Many organisations within the cultural sector have important contributions to make to this campaign, but few are likely to be as well placed as public libraries to generate change. This document aims to stimulate and direct this role by providing practical guidance on what libraries can do to help.

A regenerated and proactive library sector can help both individuals and communities to develop skills and confidence, and help improve social networking. It also supports community, adult and family learning. Against this background, it is important that the services libraries offer should be readily accessible to all who need or would benefit from them. Many library authorities have already taken steps to ensure that their services embrace as wide an audience as possible, and this guidance contains some examples of good practice which illustrate what can be achieved. But the response has often been piecemeal. What is needed now is more comprehensive strategic guidance which can translate into sustainable solutions.

The Government wants libraries to be at the very heart of the communities they serve, allowing everyone, irrespective of their age or social background, to have access to the widest possible range of information, knowledge and services. We want libraries to play a major role in supporting formal education and life-long learning for everyone. We want the facilities and services they provide to be accessible at the times when people most want to use them; and we want the local community to be involved in developing the range of services that they provide.

The aim of this policy guidance is to help ensure that this ideal can be realised for all sections of the community. Because the social exclusion agenda will differ from place to place, the guidance identifies basic principles which can be adapted to local circumstances. We do not seek to impose solutions from above, but rather help local communities to determine what action is necessary for themselves.

Having produced this guidance for public libraries, my Department has now begun a similar exercise for public museums, galleries and archives. We aim to publicise the results early in the new year. Further reports on other parts of the cultural sector may follow. This rolling programme of action shows our continued commitment to ensuring that the services provided by the cultural sector are available to the many and not the few, and have a direct relevance to the day to day lives of ordinary people.



CHRIS SMITH

Executive Summary

1. This report identifies what public library authorities can do to help combat social exclusion. Its main recommendations are that:
 - Social inclusion should be mainstreamed as a policy priority within all library and information services.
 - Library authorities should consider what specific services need to be tailored to meet the needs of minority groups and communities.
 - Library authorities should consult and involve socially excluded groups in order to ascertain their needs and aspirations.
 - Libraries should be located where there is a demand, but should build upon existing facilities and services wherever possible.
 - Opening hours should be more flexible and tailored to reflect the needs and interests of the community.
 - Library and information services should develop their role as community resource centres, providing access to communication as well as information.
 - Library authorities should consider the possibilities of co-locating their facilities with other services provided by the local authority.
 - Libraries should be the local learning place and champion of the independent learner.
 - Libraries should be a major vehicle for providing affordable (or preferably free) access to ICT at local level.
 - Library and information services should form partnerships with other learning organisations.
 - Library authorities should consider whether some services aimed at socially excluded people might be more effectively delivered on a regional basis.
2. Library authorities are encouraged to adopt a strategy based on the following six-point plan:
 - Identify the people who are socially excluded and their geographical distribution. Engage them to establish their needs.
 - Assess and review current practice.
 - Develop a strategy and prioritise resources.
 - Develop the services, and train the library staff to provide them.
 - Implement the services and publicise them.
 - Evaluate success, review and improve.

3. In taking this action plan forward, libraries will need to address a number of challenges including:
- Sustainability and long-term resource issues.
 - The need for a cultural change within libraries.
 - Responding to the new ICT environment.
 - Community ownership and community partnership.
 - Integrating the library's role within a wider geographical framework.
 - Demonstrating benefits and outcomes.

Section 1: Why a Social Inclusion Policy for Public Libraries?

- 1.1 Public libraries are highly respected and well used by the public – approximately 60% of the population in England are library members and there are some 3,600 separate public access points, spread reasonably evenly across the country. Libraries cater for all age groups, social classes and sexes. Recent research by the British Library demonstrated that 27% of regular public library users are from social class DE, compared with 22% of the population as a whole.
- 1.2 Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, the 149 English library authorities are required to provide a service for everyone who lives, works or studies in their areas. Over the years public libraries have developed a range of special services, targeted at various disadvantaged social groups to facilitate equality of provision. However, the scale and complexity of social exclusion issues now requires public libraries to take a fresh look at the extent to which their services embrace all parts of our society. Libraries now need to address what can be done to ensure that they serve the 40% of the population who are not library members.
- 1.3 Public libraries are a focal point for the provision of information services in the community. As such they have an important role to play in helping to combat social exclusion and promote lifelong learning. A number of the proposals emerging from the various Policy Action Teams established by the Cabinet Office's Social Exclusion Unit relate to services that public libraries can and should be providing, particularly through the medium of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- 1.4 Some library authorities are already extremely active and imaginative in developing policies and services aimed at combatting social exclusion. However, the pattern of provision is uneven and there is no national framework to influence or guide local initiatives. For example, the appraisal of 1998 Annual Library Plans concluded that "Social inclusion was scored poorly. It was well below average in a large number of plans. We have found many individual initiatives which are clearly directed at one or more minority groups, but what seems to be lacking is a comprehensive review of social inclusion (from a library service standpoint) and a co-ordinated response to this particular challenge".
- 1.5 DCMS recently chaired a Policy Action Team (PAT) which considered the role that its sectors have to play in helping to overcome social exclusion (PAT 10 – Arts and Sport). Their published report recommends assessing provision and expenditure on culture and leisure both geographically and according to the social, ethnic and professional background of users and potential users. It also recommends that there should be more systematic community consultation and that local authorities should develop plans for community based culture and leisure activities.

1.6 As part of the implementation of the PAT10 recommendations, DCMS has defined the following overall aim of its social inclusion policy:

“To promote the involvement in culture and leisure activities of those at risk of social disadvantage or marginalisation, particularly by virtue of the area they live in; their disability or age, racial or ethnic origin. To improve the quality of people’s lives by these means.”

This guidance reflects these aims and the PAT10 recommendations. It also reflects the emerging findings of PAT15, which is considering how the socially excluded can access and take advantage of ICT. The report of PAT 15 will be published shortly, and will provide important further guidance on issues specific to social inclusion and ICT.

Section 2: The Social Inclusion Context

Understanding social exclusion

- 2.1 Social exclusion takes many forms. It can be direct or indirect, and can embrace both groups and individuals. Exclusion also has a geographical dimension embracing rural, urban and suburban areas alike.
- 2.2 People experience their problems primarily as personal misfortune and often are disinclined to address those difficulties on a collaborative basis. Measures which tackle exclusion at an individual level are supported by a range of public agencies including libraries. Indeed a library building which is free to enter without challenge can, by itself, become a valued environment for those who are socially isolated and have little contact with others.
- 2.3 At the same time individual problems are often related to problems of the locality as well as to personal circumstance. The option for people to act constructively on a joint basis with their neighbours and public authorities is poorly appreciated. Yet community development projects in the UK and elsewhere have shown that successful policies for social inclusion must encourage people to take joint action on issues affecting their neighbourhood. It is significant that some level of community activity are evident in even the most fractured communities. Public policy should build on this.
- 2.4 Community involvement in neighbourhood renewal makes a number of assumptions. It presumes that people identify with their locality; that they understand how public policies work; that they know how to plan and follow through a project; that they are well motivated towards other residents and value the alliances in which they invest; and that they are willing to devote their own time and energy to pursuing these ends. Remarkably, all these conditions are in fact met, time and time again, by small groups of people in many localities – a phenomenon which community workers call ‘ordinary people doing extraordinary things’. But it cannot be taken for granted and it cannot be created instantaneously. Community activity underpins social inclusion and effective regeneration, but it may require a great deal of time and skilled intervention to stimulate and sustain it.

Social exclusion and sustainable communities

- 2.5 Ideally, all measures taken to combat social exclusion should aim to create sustainable communities. A key feature of a sustainable community is its connections. People living in affluent communities tend to have good road systems, trouble-free service from public utilities, access to quality education and health services, access to legal and financial services, access to leisure opportunities, access to political processes, and access to information and communication channels. By contrast, a feature of life in the least integrated communities is that such connections are not well established. Sometimes this will be for straightforward practical reasons such as lack of amenities or lack of transport. Sometimes it is caused by perceptions or for cultural reasons, such as a perceived lack of opportunities, lack of confidence caused by previous bad experience with bureaucracy, or a cycle of low educational achievement.

- 2.6 Social policy therefore needs to address two kinds of barriers which prevent the development of the sustainable community. The first are the infrastructure barriers, which constrain the 'connectedness' of a given neighbourhood. These include the flow of information and the provision of educational opportunities. The second are cultural barriers which constrain people's ability to address the issues which affect them.

Social exclusion and information in disadvantaged communities

- 2.7 Communications and information are the lifeblood of sustainable communities, and public services such as libraries, together with community groups, are often important conduits for information and knowledge. In disadvantaged communities isolation and inertia may constitute formidable barriers to the flow of information, personal relationships may be weak, and creative neighbourhood networks may function poorly. Such communities are unlikely to enjoy the vital flow of information, through which residents share their experiences and act collectively to express their needs and improve their quality of life.
- 2.8 If the flow of information drops below certain critical levels, the local information ecology is vulnerable and 'information stagnation' sets in. Levels of face-recognition drop significantly, people stop receiving and sharing information, relatively little information enters or leaves the locality, and the neighbourhood could begin to atrophy. In such a context, the challenge is to help establish and sustain healthy conditions in which informal communication and the exchange of information can flourish. In these circumstances it is vitally important for communities to have a place to go to that is convenient, local and unthreatening. For the foreseeable future there will be a need for community buildings which people are comfortable about entering, a common space where they find an appropriate range of resources and support, and where as a community they can exert genuine influence over what happens.
- 2.9 The features of a flourishing community information environment include:
- (i) a culture of participation, collaboration, information sharing and diversity.
 - (ii) available skills – communication skills, information handling skills, processing skills.
 - (iii) responsible gatekeepers – key local activists or professionals who are links between information and its applications.
 - (iv) 'occasions' – informal social opportunities where information is exchanged and refined in a social setting.
 - (v) an appropriate administrative and physical infrastructure which encourages community development.
 - (vi) relevant, accessible content.
- 2.10 A neighbourhood with these features is likely to be a fertile environment for engaging and meeting the needs of people who are marginalised. Public libraries have an important role in helping to establish and sustain the flow of information within excluded groups and communities.

The Information Age – ICT for personal and community development

- 2.11 The Information Age has created fundamental social changes which call for policy action and for cultural adjustments at all levels of public service. These will be reflected in new kinds of social relationships, cross-sectoral partnerships, changes in patterns of communication, new ways of learning and new forms of mutual support.
- 2.12 These changes are occurring at a pace which many people find daunting and confusing. For those on the margins of our society, the potential benefits of enhanced information and communication often make no impression or are viewed as 'not for us'. Significant or growing gaps between those who have access to information and those who don't are unacceptable. Public library authorities and other local agencies have crucial roles to play in exploiting the new technologies to generate social cohesion, community involvement and participation. Communities which can exploit the Internet to improve links with public agencies, keep their political representatives informed, and establish economic connections, will have a greater chance of being sustainable than those that do not.
- 2.13 Opportunities which promote face-recognition, which reduce fear and isolation, and which promote communication, are fundamental to creating a socially inclusive society. Those responsible for ICT based services have a role in promoting such 'connectedness' within neighbourhoods, for example by promoting:
- IT Awareness days;
 - the development of community calendars;
 - the management of discussion lists on local issues;
 - the preparation of newsletters and multimedia documents about the neighbourhood; and
 - virtual reality community planning.
- 2.14 By providing access to ICT and encouraging library buildings to be used as neutral meeting places for residents, public library authorities can contribute significantly to community regeneration. Libraries which take the initiative, as many are already doing, to reach out to poorly connected and poorly informed residents of their locality, will be strengthening the social cohesiveness of their area or region. This activity needs to become the norm within libraries.

Section 3: Identifying the Barriers that Keep People Away

- 3.1 In considering what they should do to combat social exclusion, Public library authorities need to consider the circumstances of their communities and the reasons why some people do not make any, or full, use of their services. Some of the main barriers to a socially inclusive use of libraries are:
- (i) Institutional
 - (ii) Personal and social
 - (iii) Related to perceptions and awareness; and
 - (iv) Environmental.

Institutional

- 3.2 These are the barriers that authorities, libraries and library staff themselves may create, and which may discourage or restrict usage by certain people or sections of the community. They include:
- Unsuitable or unduly restrictive opening hours, or restrictions upon the availability of library services.
 - Inappropriate staff attitudes and behaviour.
 - Inappropriate rules and regulations.
 - Charging policies which disadvantage those on low incomes.
 - Book stock policies which do not reflect the needs of the community or are not in suitable formats.
 - Lack of signage in buildings, so that people can not easily find their way around.
 - Lack of a sense of ownership and involvement by the community.
 - Lack of integration of local authority services and a focal point for delivering them.
 - Lack of adequate provision of services or facilities for people with disabilities.

Personal and social

- 3.3 These barriers exist either in personal terms, or because of cultural or community circumstances. They include:
- Lack of basic skills in reading, writing and communication.
 - Low income and poverty.
 - Direct and indirect discrimination.

- Lack of social contact.
- Low self esteem.
- Lack of permanent fixed address.

Perceptions and awareness

3.4 Perceptions that “libraries are not for us” exist both in individual and community terms. This perception causes difficulties for:

- People who are educationally disadvantaged.
- People who live in isolation from wider society.
- People who don't think libraries are relevant to their lives or needs.
- People with a lack of knowledge of facilities and services, and how to use them.

Environmental

3.5 Environmental barriers include:

- Difficult physical access into and within buildings.
- Problem estates and urban decay.
- The isolation problems experienced by rural communities.
- Poor transport links.

Section 4: The Social Inclusion Policy

4.1 This section sets out what we believe to be the basic components of a comprehensive social inclusion policy for public libraries. The policy objectives set out below are a framework for action, not a solution to social exclusion. They represent elements of good practice, rather than a rigid blueprint for action. We must ensure that they are developed, implemented and monitored, not only with the active involvement of socially excluded people, but also as part of an overall social inclusion strategy within the local authority.

- **Social inclusion should be mainstreamed as a policy priority for library and information services.**

Mainstreaming means putting a principle at the heart of policy making or the development of services. Social inclusion issues should underpin all aspects of library provision. This applies both where services are being enhanced, and when there is pressure to reduce or cut library services.

- **Library authorities should consider what specific services need to be tailored to meet the needs of minority groups and communities.**

Public library and information services should be available and accessible to everyone. To help to realise this goal, libraries should provide services to specific groups of citizens, such as older people and people with disabilities, to help them overcome their exclusion and enable them to be more active and informed. We encourage public library authorities to use mobile library services, particularly drawing on volunteers, to deliver books to housebound people in the community.

SHROPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL: TAILORING SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF MINORITY GROUPS: SHROPSHIRE COMMUNITY CARE MOBILE LIBRARY

Shropshire County Council provide a specially adapted mobile library to serve elderly and disabled members of the community. This vehicle visits 120 day centres, residential and care homes and sheltered accommodation throughout the County Library area, on a five-week rota. Purchase of the vehicle, which can be lowered to provide ground-level access, was sponsored by the Rural Development Commission, and the publishers Alderscroft, and Mills and Boon. It is mainly stocked with large print and talking books, and has a computerised library catalogue. The library also provides small deposit book collections at the residential and care homes, and supports care workers in their further education studies.

- **Library authorities should consult and involve socially excluded groups in order to ascertain their needs and aspirations.**

It is important that where authorities propose to offer services to overcome social exclusion, the groups concerned are involved in planning, introducing and monitoring the service. This is more than just asking them what they want; it is involving them in all stages of the process. In doing so, authorities will be acting in the spirit of the Modernising Government agenda, ensuring that the service delivers what socially excluded people actually need.

ISLINGTON LIBRARY SERVICES FOR BLACK AND OTHER ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS

Islington Library Service liaises closely with fifty different ethnic minority groups within the Borough. Outreach librarians talk to the groups to ascertain their library and information needs, and involve them in the selection and acquisition of materials. Acting in partnership, the library supports the groups in promoting their ethnic culture, runs education programmes such as 'English as a second language', and trains the co-ordinators in information provision. Library material is translated into fifteen key minority languages. The outreach librarians have a regular visit programme to the groups to provide ongoing support and review needs, and the head of the library service has a twice-yearly consultation meeting with representatives from the black and other ethnic minority communities.

- **Libraries should be located where there is a demand, but should build upon existing facilities and services wherever possible.**

Libraries have an important role to play as a public space, often acting as a focal point within communities. An important feature should be their non-intimidating and neutral nature, and this can be helpful in providing information and services for socially excluded groups. The existing network of library buildings is not always conveniently placed to attract socially excluded people, but the provision of new facilities requires long term planning and, often, additional resources. Much can be done in the meantime to meet local need, drawing on the adaptability afforded by mobile library facilities and other outreach services. Facilities to meet the need of socially excluded people may not need to be in dedicated library buildings at all. There is plenty of scope for linking library services to business, community or other facilities in the locality.

SEASIDE, EASTBOURNE: NEW METHODS OF LIBRARY PROVISION

In Seaside, a deprived area of Eastbourne, the local library was being used by only 5% of the local population, and was located in a large building with maintenance problems for which East Sussex library service had tried to find other uses without success. After consultation with the local community, the service was reorganised. It is now provided from five locations, each within five minutes walk of the old library building and each aimed at different target markets with opening times to suit. A staffed library is already in operation in St Aidan's Methodist Church, which fits around regular religious use of the building. Other outlets include a residential care home, a local pub and a local branch of a national bank. In addition, a mobile library will serve the area.

- **Opening hours should be more flexible and tailored to reflect the needs and interests of the community.**

Opening hours should be 'family friendly' and convenient. Restrictive opening hours are a major barrier to social inclusion. In particular, library authorities should consider the benefits to the community of more extensive weekend opening of libraries, including on Sundays, even if this means that opening needs to be more restricted during the week. A further possible method of providing access outside of normal opening hours is to establish swipe card admission to library buildings, with CCTV coverage.

ESSEX LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE: EXTENSION OF ACCESS TIMES: ESSEX LIBRARIES SUNDAY OPENING

Between October 1998 and June 1999, Essex County Council ran a pilot scheme to open five libraries on Sunday afternoons. This initiative was linked to the National Year of Reading. A customer survey was undertaken to evaluate effectiveness of Sunday opening. This showed that on average 384 people visited each library on a Sunday and the vast majority had chosen to go then simply because they had more time to do so. Around a fifth used the library on Sunday because it meant that the whole family could come together. Sunday opening also appeared to attract a greater proportion of younger and middle aged people than opening hours during the week. Following the success of the scheme, Essex County Council approved funding to open one library in each District Council area every Sunday. From October 3 1999, twelve libraries including the five pilots will be open on Sundays.

- **Library and information services should develop their role as community resource centres, providing access to communication as well as information.**

It has been suggested that although they are based in the community, some libraries give no sense of community ownership, management or accountability. As a consequence, libraries may fail to engage many people who could make the best use of them.

Correcting this will help to ensure that library services become embedded into the local community. They should be regarded as a community facility, rather than simply a council service. Opportunities should be taken for libraries to support other kinds of community need, and in doing so become more joined-up with other local authority services.

LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE MOSS SIDE MILLENNIUM POWERHOUSE

The Powerhouse is a new youth centre being developed in the Moss Side area of Manchester. It will provide a library and information centre (which will also provide careers advice) together with an ICT suite, music and arts studios, fitness centre, sports hall and performance area, café, creche and residential wing. This has involved the library service in a partnership approach with other Council services, private companies and community groups. A young people's librarian has been recruited who is also trained in youth work. The aim is to involve the local community in stock selection and marketing the library facilities.

- **Library authorities should consider the possibilities of co-locating their facilities with other services provided by the local authority.**

In order to promote their role as community resource centres, library authorities should investigate what options are open to them for integrating some elements of their service with other services in the community. For example, co-locating with leisure facilities would enable the users of both library and leisure facilities to become aware of, and to benefit from, a range of services they might not otherwise have encountered. There may also be scope for dual use libraries in conjunction with local schools.

TRAFFORD LIBRARY SERVICE: CO-LOCATING LIBRARIES WITH LOCAL SERVICES

Trafford library and information services has integrated three of its smaller libraries into existing and well-used facilities in nearby locations. Lostock branch library combined with a school library to create Lostock Community and School Library in December 1998. The following January, Greatstone and Bowfell libraries opened in local leisure centres. Both of the libraries co-located with leisure facilities use self-issue computer terminals, a significant innovation for Trafford, which enables the service to remain open when unstaffed. The new locations and the extended opening hours are very popular with young people, and the number of users has increased.

- **Libraries should be the local learning place and champion of the independent learner.** Libraries are major learning resource centres. They should ideally develop this role to include the provision of homework facilities. For the community as a whole they should focus on developing facilities for informal and self-directed learning.

PEACEHAVEN: THE LIBRARY AS A LOCAL LEARNING RESOURCE CENTRE

Peacehaven Library, located in the Meridian Shopping Centre, is a modern facility which contains almost thirty computer terminals. The library provides a homework club with six sessions a week, each of two hours duration. The convenient timing of sessions together with the range of computer equipment available, has encouraged as many as 40 children to attend some sessions. ICT training is also provided for the public through a partnership between the library service and Lewes Tertiary College and backed by local employers. An additional community benefit is that the Tertiary College now holds a range of adult education courses at the library.

- **Libraries should be a major vehicle for providing affordable (or preferably free) access to ICT at local level.** The Government is making a significant national investment in ICT through the New Opportunities Fund. It is important that access to ICT is available to all, including support and training for users. This service could extend to the provision of a personal e-mail address for all who want one. As part of this process, public library authorities should consider whether their charging policies for ICT use are consistent with a policy of mainstreaming social inclusion.

SUNDERLAND ELECTRONIC VILLAGE HALLS

The Sunderland Libraries are opening the doors to ICT for all by developing a network of 'electronic village halls' throughout the City. Five have been opened so far and they are based in library buildings, a further education college, a community business centre, and around a community and voluntary group network. They provide free access to PCs and the Internet, a wide range of software for adults and children, and trained staff available to help users. They also run a range of free IT courses, homework support, and support lifelong learning with Computers Don't Bite, University for Industry, and IT for All.

- **Partnerships with other learning organisations.**

Public libraries can be a key partner in a consortium of learning networks. They should join with other learning organisations to provide a comprehensive service to the community. Libraries should be included as central players within the membership of the lifelong learning partnerships being developed by local authorities.

SEACROFT, LEEDS: BOOKSTART, A SCHEME TO ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO BRING BABIES TO THE LIBRARY

Leeds Library and Information Services, in partnership with a local cosmetic company, Elida Fabergé, Social Services and the East Leeds Family Learning Centre, runs the Bookstart scheme in the East Leeds area. The scheme covers the four branch libraries of East Leeds. Since April 1999, every new mother receives a Bookstart bag from the health visitor on their seven-month visit. The bag contains a leaflet and poster about Bookstart, a questionnaire about the parents' current use of the library, a wall chart and a board book. Elida Fabergé, the sponsors, are keen to encourage literacy among the local community, who form the majority of their workforce. About 60 packs have been given out each month since the scheme began. The aim of the scheme is to promote reading with children, particularly among parents who do not see themselves as natural readers, and to encourage parents to join their babies to the library even if they are not members themselves. The East Leeds Family Learning Centre also runs, in collaborations with Leeds Library Service, a Second Chance School and a joint school library for all the primary schools in the Seacroft and Manston area.

- **Library authorities should consider whether some services might be more effectively delivered on a regional basis.**

Library authorities should recognise the need to work on a variety of geographical levels. Provision on an authority-wide scale may be too narrow for some purposes. Working regionally on ICT infrastructure issues or minority languages stock provision, for example, may bring significant advantages in terms of effective delivery and economies of scale.

GATESHEAD CENTRAL LIBRARY: DELIVERING LIBRARY SERVICES ON A REGIONAL BASIS: THENORTHEAST.COM

Twelve local authorities are in partnership to provide the North of England's official web site. Administered by Gateshead Central Library, this is a gateway to over 280 public library service points in the region; and has over 1,500 links to local web sites, from the arts to business, sport to travel and tourism. This project is supported by LIBERATOR, the European Commission's DGXIII Telematics for Libraries Programme. The web site can be accessed at <http://thenortheast.com>.

Section 5: Means of Achieving those Objectives

5.1 This section sets out a process by which public library authorities can implement the policy objectives set out above. We suggest that public library authorities adopt a strategy based on the following six-point plan.

1. Identify the people who are socially excluded and their distribution. Engage them and establish their needs

This requires an holistic approach across the local authority. A starting point should be the production of a community profile. Authorities will then need to consider which of the barriers to social inclusion apply to their particular circumstances, and which groups are most affected.

Once these groups have been identified, the authority will then need to engage with them in order to establish their information and communication needs and how they can best be delivered. The representatives of the groups will need to be involved in developing and establishing the service, and monitoring its success.

BRADFORD CENTRAL LIBRARY: X-CHANGE TEENAGE LIBRARY: ADAPTING THE SERVICE TO THE AUDIENCE

Bradford Central Library adapted a poorly used newspaper reading room into a teenage library for 13 to 18 year olds, following consultation with current young users. The facility was created in 1985, and since then has remained very popular with the young people of the area. The central library in Bradford is unusual in that it serves as a local library for people living in the inner city, the majority of whom are Asian. 70 – 80% of Xchange users are from ethnic minorities, and the facility has been adopted by young people as a place to spend time after school and at weekends. Xchange contains books and music tapes which members can borrow. Borrowing books is free although there is a charge for borrowing tapes. Users can access the Internet on the computer, and the library hopes to make word-processing available in the next year. In the first years of Xchange, staff were concerned that the majority of users were boys, and that few girls visited regularly. There have been experiments with girls only sessions but these have not been as successful as hoped. Girls do, increasingly, use the room, especially for borrowing books, but it still seems to be mainly boys who value having somewhere to meet and spend time with friends. The library regularly carries out surveys of Xchange users.

2. Access and Review Current Practice

The starting point should be to review the services that are currently provided by the authority, particularly those aimed at minority groups. The key questions are: *How far does the service meet the needs of all sections of the community*, and *Is it helping to combat social exclusion?* This should take into account other relevant authority strategies relating to IT, poverty and equal opportunities, and the existence of community/voluntary sector information networks.

MERTON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE: ASSESS AND REVIEW CURRENT PRACTICE

Best Value principles have been used to review library and heritage services in the London Borough of Merton. Each service area was challenged in terms of "how far does this service meet the needs of all sections of the community" and "is it helping to combat social exclusion". This led to a new specification for each service being developed. The specifications were informed by comparing them with similar authorities, and an assessment of alternative local providers (competition). Account was also taken of the existing Council corporate policies on equal opportunities, combatting poverty, and information and communications technology. The specifications were then the subject of consultation with all key stakeholders, including users, non-users staff and Council members. The revised specifications will provide the framework for a new service structure, staff structure and a strategy for achieving cultural change within the library service.

3. Develop strategic objectives and prioritise resources

Once the needs have been established, authorities should consider how they can best be met. The strategy can be all-embracing, aiming to draw up a programme to help develop social inclusion across the community, or more limited, initially concentrating on the highest priority areas of social need.

The strategy is likely to have resource implications to carry out these activities, but it should be remembered that many of the services targeted at socially excluded people can also be used by other members of the community. As a first step, authorities might consider the possibilities of increasing or redirecting resources to and within the library service. All funding sources will need to be considered and additional resources might be found by working with others and developing partnerships, both within local authorities, and with outside groups and agencies. Public library authorities should also consider the role of volunteers in helping to deliver some library services.

4. Develop the services, and train the library staff to provide them

In addition to making new facilities or services available, it is important to recognise the role of front-line library staff. The culture of the authority's library service itself may need to change, in terms of attitudes and behaviours, values and beliefs. Library staff and all volunteers should be fully informed and involved in the process, and be equipped with the new skills, knowledge and competence they will need. Library authorities should encourage volunteers to become involved in any social inclusion initiatives alongside professional librarians.

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY SERVICE: TRAINING LIBRARY STAFF FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

Under the broad heading of Equalities Training Programme, a series of training workshops are being developed by Birmingham library service. Initially these are for community librarians (local managers) but will increasingly be adapted for all staff. The themes recognise the need to support librarians with awareness training on a variety of equality issues on a regular basis. Topics include mental health customer care, issues and resources for gay people, poverty awareness, issues facing the African-Caribbean community, dyslexia information and Asian literature in English. Speakers have included students of English for speakers of other languages, black British writers, Irish writers, writers from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In all cases speakers are invited from relevant voluntary and statutory groups.

5. Implement the services and publicise them

As well as making new services available, it is important that they are publicised among the target groups, who should be given every encouragement and incentive to use them. This is an area where local champions from within the groups can play a significant role. Promotion should be continuous, and the opportunity should be taken to publicise success whenever it occurs.

6. Evaluate success, review and improve

It is important that the outcomes and success of the service are regularly evaluated against predetermined objectives, criteria for success and performance indicators. This will enable libraries to demonstrate the difference they make to local people, learn lessons, and make further improvements to their service. Evaluation should start at the beginning of the process, and relate to the Annual Library Plan.

BIRMINGHAM LIBRARY SERVICE: EVALUATE SUCCESS AND REVIEW

Birmingham's Library Services at Home provides a library service to over 2000 housebound individuals and to a large number of residential homes and day-centres. In 1996 a service user survey demonstrated that there was a very low take up of the service from members of the African Caribbean community. The library service carried out research into the reasons for the low take up and a number of recommendations were made. These focussed on the need for culturally sensitive personal contact, and encouraging trust and relationships between the community and the library service. The research also highlighted the need to provide relevant resources in print and on audio tape, including religious material, and books and photographs about the Caribbean. Following the research, Birmingham library service have recruited staff from the African Caribbean community, and hold regular events to encourage reading and use of libraries. The number of people from the African Caribbean community using the Library Services at Home has risen from five to over fifty. The service is now re-evaluating the scheme to identify further improvements.

Role of the DCMS

- 5.2 To help bring the changes envisaged in this paper about, DCMS will:
- (i) Develop the annual library planning process to put more emphasis on the social inclusion aspects of the library and information service.
 - (ii) Consider the extent to which standards and benchmarks reflect social inclusion objectives, and how these need to be strengthened.
 - (iii) Help to ensure that, in the longer term, library funding opportunities reflect these social inclusion objectives.

Section 6: The Challenges that Libraries Face

- 6.1 Implementing social inclusion policies brings challenges for library authorities if they are to provide a sustainable, long term service to socially excluded people. The main challenges are:
- **Sustainability and long-term resource issues**

Adequate resources will be necessary to sustain the service, and particular consideration needs to be given to funding issues relating to the provision of ICT and to extending opening hours. Many authorities will be able to adopt short-term measures that may provide some quick gains. However, a more significant contribution lies in the development of a long-term social inclusion strategy and measures which are sustainable. The challenge for libraries is to use their resources more imaginatively in order to support new strategies.
 - **Need for a cultural change within libraries**

Mainstreaming and adopting positive measures for social inclusion means adapting and extending the range of services provided by libraries, forming new links and partnerships with the community, and challenging some of the more traditional values and practices of libraries. This cannot successfully be achieved without the active support of library staff. At present, the majority of libraries offer a 'shop-front' model of provision, in which people use facilities for self-defined purposes. There should be a transition to community-oriented provision of facilities, particularly in partnership with education authorities, in which libraries work together with other services to address all aspects of social exclusion in the community.
 - **Responding to the new ICT environment**

The arrival of the Information Age, and its impact on people's lives, means that libraries have an important role in developing a socially inclusive information society. They are an important conduit for information and communication at local level. A cornerstone of this is providing affordable local access to ICT.
 - **Community ownership/community partnership**

If social inclusion policies are to be fully effective, it is vital that individuals and representatives from excluded and community groups are involved in developing, introducing and monitoring the service. Establishing and maintaining these links is time consuming, but every opportunity should be taken for fostering community consultation and partnership.
 - **Integrating the library's role within a wider geographical framework**

It is essential that the social inclusion activities of library services are not considered in isolation. They must be integrated within the local authority's wider strategy for improving social inclusion, and the library services must connect effectively with other local authority services.
 - **Demonstrating benefits and outcomes**

Through annual library plans and other monitoring, library authorities will be required to demonstrate the benefits and outcomes of their social inclusion plans and activities. We particularly encourage library authorities to set targets for increasing the participation in services of under-represented groups in their locality. It is therefore important that objectives, criteria for success and performance indicators are set at the outset, and regularly reviewed and evaluated.

Section 7: The Consultation Process

7.1 We would welcome comments on the ideas set out in this paper. Our longer-term aim is to link these policy objectives with others being developed for museums, galleries and archives, and to pull the various elements together during the year 2000.

7.2 Comments should be sent by 31 January 2000 to:

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Appendix A: Bibliography

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In addition, the School of Information Management at Leeds Metropolitan University is currently undertaking a major policy research project into Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion. This is being funded by the Library and Information Commission. A report to the LIC and executive briefings aimed at both librarians and policy makers will be available at the end of the project in Spring 2000, and a number of working papers are being prepared, some of which are already available. Further details about the project are available from Rebecca Linley at the School of Information Management, Leeds Metropolitan University, The Grange, Beckett Park Campus, Leeds LS6 3QS; Tel: 0113 2832600 ext 3661; e-mail: r.linley@lmu.ac.uk.

Appendix B: Terms of Reference and List of Policy Group Members

1. In July 1999 the DCMS set up an informal discussion group to help it develop the framework for a social inclusion policy for public libraries in England. Membership of the group is set out below.
2. The aim of the group was to help develop a framework of broad objectives which DCMS will be looking to the sector to achieve, and to assist in the identification of examples of best practice currently taking place
3. The objectives of the framework were to:
 - Identify what the key objectives and components of a social inclusion policy for public libraries might be.
 - Identify the means of achieving those objectives
 - Identify examples of best practice.

MEMBERSHIP

Mark Mason	Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) (Chair)
Guy Daines	Library Association
Stuart Davies	Heritage Lottery Fund
Kevin Harris	Community Development Foundation
John Hicks	Advisory Council on Libraries
Grace Kempster	LIC Commissioner/Essex County Council
Bill Macnaught	Society of Chief Librarians/Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Tim Owen	Libraries and Information Commission (LIC)
John Pateman	London Borough of Merton
Peter Beauchamp	DCMS (Libraries Information & Archives Division)
Ros Saper	DCMS (Strategy Unit)

Secretariat:

Chris Atkins	DCMS (Museums and Galleries Division)
Karina Grazin	DCMS (Museums and Galleries Division)

