

FULFILLING THEIR POTENTIAL

A National Development Programme for Young People's Library Services

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Framework for the Future is the new government strategy on libraries. It challenges library services to develop national programmes, locally delivered, which will create universally available and distinctive library services.

Framework must be a turning point. It offers library services an important opportunity to review and redefine their relationship with key target groups. This *Fulfilling Their Potential* report focuses on services to young people aged 11-19, taking young people and their needs as its starting point. The report and an accompanying Evidence File analyses consultation, research and future trends and comes to the conclusion that libraries have a distinctive role to play in improving the quality of life of all young people, with a particularly important role in relation to young people at risk.

The report shows how libraries can deliver on the government's agenda for improving the areas of young people's lives outlined in *Every Child Matters*

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

It outlines how libraries' work with young people can play a key role in joined up local authority work to deliver on the Shared Priorities agreed by national and local government. It highlights the increasingly important participation agenda and challenges libraries to play a much greater role in involving young people in designing policies and services.

Fulfilling Their Potential cites case studies which show that many libraries already offer young people a powerful mix of learning, social and creative experiences. If this can be achieved in some places, then the ambitions of all library services should be to achieve the same. The report outlines a new co-ordinated approach to developing services within a quality framework which could equalize access and extend and strengthen libraries' support for 11-19 year olds. It encourages libraries to be more responsive to young people's needs in designing services and more dynamic in delivering and marketing them.

The report proposes that a national programme be developed which would offer young people access, wherever they live, to:

- The library as *the space* in the community for young people
- Inspiring, relevant reading including creative reading activities
- The chance to get involved and shape the library service
- The library as the place to participate in the wider community and in democracy
- The library as the independent place for information and study support

A national development plan is outlined which includes initial sample work on a progression framework outlining three levels of the offer to young people, with the minimum being the outcome all libraries would strive to achieve – the national offer. The aim is to achieve a baseline provision which ensures all young people have access to the same "offer" and to raise standards by supporting libraries in aiming higher once the minimum has been achieved.

The report is accompanied by an Evidence File containing a detailed policy audit and summaries of consultation sessions with young people, policy makers and library staff.

Aims and context

In February 2003 the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published *Framework for the Future*¹, a new strategy for the development of the public library service. This is being put into action by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA).

One strand of the action plan is a piece of work to review and redefine the relationship which libraries have with young people aged 11-19, taking up *Framework for the Future*'s challenge to develop universally available and distinctive library services. The work has been led by a small library strategy group representing MLA, the Society of Chief Librarians, the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians and the Youth Libraries Group. They have been supported by The Reading Agency and The National Youth Agency has acted as a critical friend. The work has been reviewed periodically by a consultation group of practicing librarians.

The report focuses on the work of public libraries with this age group and does not cover school libraries and School Library Services. These make a huge contribution to both learning and reading for enjoyment and their staff often act as invaluable collaborators with their colleagues in public libraries, bringing their special knowledge and expertise to the partnership. Anyone who wants to understand more about the important role of School Libraries and School Library Services should read *School Libraries – Making a Difference*².

Fulfilling their Potential: a National Development Programme for Young People and Libraries provides a basis for planning a new 10 year vision and strategy to redefine libraries' relationship with young people. Libraries have a crucial role to play in supporting young people and many library services are innovative in their work with this age group.

Framework for the Future challenges libraries to offer common services to everyone, wherever they live. It is now essential that all library services learn from the achievements of those at the cutting edge and embrace the changes needed to make sure that libraries and young people can fulfill their potential.

The report represents Phase One of the process. It is structured around three main themes:

- The needs of young people from 11 to 19
- The government's policy ambitions for the social potential of the country and the participation of young people in achieving them
- The strengths of library services in responding to these challenges

Fulfilling Their Potential brings together research, best practice and consultation into a document setting out recommendations, strategic principles and national offers for development and delivery over the next decade. It aims to make systemic changes which will radically improve young people's experience of library services. It recommends new directions for services and defines minimum national offers from libraries to young people. These are challenging but they can be achieved progressively. It also outlines the next phases of the work, which include research, action planning and implementation.

As you read this report you will find a large amount of contextual material. This is because the focus is primarily young people themselves, their needs and how they can be offered a better future. It is only after these issues have been given due consideration and young people's voices heard that we can decide how libraries can play their part in improving young people's life chances.

Methodology

The remit assigned to the strategy group has been interpreted in an ambitious way. It has involved a wide ranging audit of current national policies, a review of the partnership potential offered by libraries, research, consultation and developmental thinking. This has been a major undertaking in a very short time. It has created the architecture for a national offer from libraries to significantly enhance young people's lives. The working group has undertaken:

Policy work

A review of relevant government policies and initiatives, showing how closely linked they are to the strengths and potential of library services. An evidence file with the detailed outcomes of the policy audit is the background document for this report, and can be found at www.readingagency.org.uk.

Identifying common ground with policy makers in government and other organizations, through consultation meetings with DfES, DCMS, the Home Office, the LGA and Connexions. We hope that these discussions will pave the way for better communication with policy makers and stronger links with the wider cultural and learning sector.

Identifying best practice in library services for young people through case studies which show how libraries deliver on national and local agendas and their potential to work powerfully in partnerships to engage with hard-to-reach groups.

Research/ forecasting

- A review of some of the relevant research on young people's reading and information needs.
- Forecasts of demographic and social change from key government reports

Development of key principles and ideas on national offers

An outline of key principles and ideas on national offers that should underpin the development of library services to young people

Testing these through consultation

- Consultation with professional groups, including the Society of Chief Librarians, the Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians and the Youth Libraries Group
- Consultation with three groups of young people in an urban and rural setting, as well as non-users and young mothers, in conjunction with the National Youth Agency
- Periodic review of progress by a grassroots consultation group of practicing librarians.

The initial findings from the work are that libraries' potential to address some crucial issues about the life chances of young people in this country has been inhibited by a number of factors. These include the reluctance of some library services to address the needs of young people, because they find them more demanding than those of other sectors of the community. This reluctance manifests itself in a lack of investment in infrastructure, stock and relevant staff training. They have also been exacerbated by policy makers' stereotypical image, lack of insight and low expectations of libraries.

This report outlines a way forward which addresses those issues and gives young people's library services the priority they deserve.

The Client Group: now and in the future

Young People 11-19

Young people between the ages of 11-19 are probably the most diverse members of the library community and they change at a rapid rate. *Start with the Child*³ describes how young teenagers start to separate themselves from their parents and carers and experiment with their own identity. They need to experience different perspectives, approaches and opinions to those with which they have grown up. They feel under pressure to succeed at school and need somewhere to study. As they get older they need support and information for taking life decisions. They start to develop adult style networks, need their own space and are beginning to be aware that many adults and institutions project a negative view of their age group. Many young people experience conflict within school and family settings.

Within the space of nine years, young people change from highly dependent circumstances into young adults with the right to vote, drive, drink, leave home, marry and have children of their own. As *Start with the Child* says:

They are expected to act like adults, want to express themselves as young people and are often treated as children

At such a time of potential and personal upheaval, young people need to be encouraged to develop wider perspectives. Reading gives them the chance to grow emotionally and nurture their creativity, outside the confines of the curriculum and the more pressurized world of school.

An engagement with reading for enjoyment is also critical for young people's life chances. The OECD's 2002 *Reading for Change*⁴ study found that a love of reading is more important for young people's educational success than their family's wealth or class. Children from deprived backgrounds do better in tests than those from more affluent homes if they enjoy reading books, newspapers and comics in their spare time. The *Social Focus on Young People*⁵ report states that Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils who said that they intended to continue in full time education beyond 16 were likely to be involved in greater number of out-of-hours activities (including library and book club based activities, which were amongst the more popular activities), than those who did not.

Social and Educational Context – The Current Situation

The social context of young people has changed over recent years and although physical and sexual maturity comes earlier, most young people stay in full time education longer and are economically dependent longer. On the other hand, many young people do not achieve a level of qualification which will give them access to occupations demanding higher order skills. For those who do not continue in fulltime education, unemployment rates are higher than among older people. For those in employment, young people are among the lowest paid in society. A small but significant minority of young people are not in employment or education. This includes those who are sick, disabled or caring for their family.

Looking at the statistics, some young people seem to leave the statutory education system early then return to it later, presumably when they realize how lack of qualifications will inhibit their progress.

In 2001, just over 3 out of 4 16-18 year olds were in education and training, an increase from just over 7 out of 10 in 1991⁶

- In 2001, 70% of those studying for GCSE A level were 16-19 and 21% were 25 and over⁷
- For higher education below degree level, 65% were 25 and over⁸
- For degrees or higher level degrees, 44% were 25 and over⁹
- 50% of school leavers have less than the required qualifications for 80% of the job market. This means that there are more jobs than young people to fill them, but also that 50% of the market are competing for the 20% of the jobs which do not require a high qualification¹⁰

The Impact of Poor Literacy Skills

For many young people there is a strong correlation between poor levels of achievement and disaffection or anti-social behaviour:

- In 2001 around one in four 19 year olds lacked a basic level qualification¹¹
- 42% of young offenders have been excluded from school¹²
- 50% of prison inmates have difficulty with reading, writing and maths¹³

Health and other issues

Although young people are among the healthiest groups in society, increases in conditions like asthma and meningitis have been reported. Young women are more likely than young men to eat healthily, but less likely to exercise. Girls aged 13-15 are more likely to smoke than boys of the same age and young people, especially young men, are more likely than the rest of the population to be “binge” drinkers.

- The number of young people who have health problems, take drugs and get into trouble with the law is growing:
- The number of children aged 10-16 who are in custody has doubled in the last decade¹⁴.
- The number of problem drug users aged 15-24 starting treatment has doubled since 1993¹⁵
- The number of births to girls conceiving before their 16th birthday fell by 20% between 1996 and 2000, the majority concentrated in manual backgrounds. However, rates of teenage conception in Britain remain much higher than in the rest of Western Europe¹⁶
- Health risks amongst young people are associated with contemporary lifestyles, e.g. eating disorders, mental health problems, recreational use of drugs¹⁷

Conclusions

To summarize the current situation, we have young people who stay in education longer, but some do not achieve their potential or have the qualifications necessary for the job market. In some cases they return to further education later. If they have very poor literacy skills, it can lead to disaffection and antisocial behaviour and the number of young people in custody is rising. There are a variety of health issues for young people, physical and mental, which give rise to concern.

Libraries can offer so much to meet young people’s need for a space of their own, exposure to different views and opinions, access to broader educational and learning experiences, health information and careers opportunities. Above all they can act as community champions of inspiring reading experiences for all young people, but especially for those whose life chances would be immeasurably improved by a re-engagement with reading and learning. They are currently an under-used resource and should take their place alongside other partner organizations to play their part in addressing these issues.

Libraries are in a unique position to foster a love of reading and complement the work of the formal education sector. They can satisfy a wide range of young people's needs in a non-threatening and easily accessible way. Libraries should aim to be *their place* in the local community.

Future trends

Some of the trends predicted for the future present major challenges to society. They highlight the need to engage young people in community life and the democratic process and to provide the right support to build relevant skills. Libraries have a huge amount to offer, but need to plan their services for young people against the background of these future trends.

Demographic Change

The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) produces the official national population projection for the UK. After the publication in September 2002 of the first results of the 2001 Census, interim projections were produced for the period from 2001-2026¹⁸.

- By 2016, it is estimated that the overall population of the UK, will be 61,459m, with 10,341m in the 0-14 year old age category and 11,718m in the 15-29 year old age category.
- The mean age will rise from 39.8 years in 2006 to 41.2 years in 2016 and the number of people of pensionable age will rise from 11,283m in 2006 to 12,049m in 2016.
- Almost 60% of the projected 4.3m increase in the UK population between 2001 and 2026 is attributable to the assumed level of net inward migration.
- By 2007, the population of pensionable age is projected to exceed the number of children.

The figures show that the world in which young people will be living in 2016 is that of an older and still aging population, with increasing ethnic diversity, particularly at the younger end of the spectrum. Any library service which aims to improve its services to this age group must keep that increased diversity in mind, or it will become increasingly irrelevant to this sector of its community.

The future workforce of this country is also radically changing and by 2011 only 18% of the UK workforce will be white, male, not disabled, under 35 and heterosexual¹⁹.

Education and Learning

There was a belief in the past that "head start" projects in the pre-school years addressing inequalities around early language and literacy development would have a beneficial impact on children and young people throughout their lives. In their recent report: *Passing Time: a report about young people and communities*,²⁰ the Institute of Public Policy Research finds that activities and projects which aim to improve the educational standards of teenagers are as important as for younger children.

The conviction that interventions at various stages of people's lives are necessary has influenced the overall structure of *Framework for the Future* and that is reflected in the emerging national offers identified by MLA, which relate to under fives, children, and adults and the age group covered by this report.

Certainly, the signs are that the improvement of educational progress for young people will continue to be an important issue. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation publication: *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2003*²¹ shows that after improvements in the second half of the 1990's, the numbers of 11-19 year olds failing to reach basic attainment levels has remained constant.

It is likely that patterns of schooling will change in the future to offer more flexibility for learners who have different approaches and abilities. The *Interim Report on the 14-19 curriculum and qualifications reform*²² aims to provide:

Valued qualifications which give recognition and status to a range of types and modes of learning and achievement and provide stretch throughout the system for all learners, but especially for high achievers

There is also a move towards a continental approach to the school day, as more schools across the country finish at 2pm or earlier. This offers more vocational choices in the afternoon and more opportunities for the informal aspects of learning, including a potential role for libraries. This responds to the comment from a young person in the Industrial Society's 2020 Vision document *Speaking up, Speaking out*²³ that

I think that a lot of the time at school...they teach you knowledge but they never teach you how to learn.

Prosperity and Inequality

The Paradox of Prosperity,²⁴ a report commissioned by the Salvation Army from the Henley Centre for Research, asserts that by 2010 more people will be living alone, self employed, working long hours and using drugs and alcohol to counter stress. They predict that prosperity will rise by 35%, but growing inequality will make the top 10% of people ten times richer than the bottom 10%. The report paints a gloomy picture, describing low income families stuck in the poverty trap with the IT revolution widening the skills gap:

Society will have become a collection of individuals mixing and matching their own set of values and this will have an additional negative, knock-on effect on community life

It is not difficult to work out which young people will end up in that bottom 10%.

The black hole kids

NACRO recently produced a report, *Missing Out*²⁵, which estimates that between 50,000 and 100,000 young people are missing from schools before sitting GCSEs or reaching the age of 16. The current tracking systems are unable to find these so-called *black hole kids*.

Who are they? The same vulnerable young people who appear on every list of priority issues, but whose needs never seem to be met. Victims of bullying, family breakdown, sexual abuse, low educational attainment or social skills. The majority are boys, and those in poverty, from minority groups and care homes. Already some libraries are using funding from trusts, like the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to work extremely effectively with some of these young people, but unless the lessons learned from such short term projects are mainstreamed they can only have a peripheral effect.

The 2020 vision report²⁶ illustrates the gaps between young people's aspirations and their expectations. They can be crudely summarized as:

We want to participate in a community where we feel we belong, and have a role and sense of identity, where there are safe places to go for support and advice and in which the political system represents our concerns and values

Their experiences are that:

Politics seem unrelated to the reality of young people's lives and policies do not include or reflect young people's views. There are not enough safe affordable places for young people to meet and they are regarded as a problem by government, the police, many adults and the media

The Role of Information and Communication Technologies

There is an important role for information and communications technologies (ICT) to play in engaging young people in democratic activity and decision making. *Logged Off?*²⁷ a recent Demos report, analyses youth projects which use ICT and concludes that digital technology offers opportunities to increase the contact between a young citizen and political institutions and to canvass young people for their views.

The report is clear that this will only work if young people are offered power over decisions that affect them. If this involvement does not lead to any real change there is a danger that young people will become even more frustrated with the political process. The report proposes that the government should fund the development of a toolkit for use by anyone with an interest in promoting young people's political engagement. The toolkit would emphasise the importance of:

- Allowing young people to own the content of any initiative by including them in the design and maintenance of it
- Including interactive features such as chatrooms, noticeboards and email, so that social uses of ICT become coupled with a more political agenda
- Considering young people's safety, especially when using online technologies
- Linking participation to tangible goals and outcomes
- Integrating ICT initiatives with other schemes and projects designed to promote engagement and participation

These are ideas that libraries could valuably bear in mind when designing ICT projects aimed at young people. The report also points to the potential for libraries to work with other organizations to use the People's Network as a point of contact between young people and the democratic process.

Young People and the Community

The IPPR report *Passing Time*²⁸ outlines how young people view their local communities and examines what activities and services young people want to see. Their findings mirror the findings from our own consultations and have major implications for the future development of services. The outcomes with particular relevance to libraries appear in italics:

- Young people need to *take a more active role in their communities*. At present, they feel that their needs are not a priority
- More work needs to be done in the future to build a coherent policy for young people and to address issues which affect them. The report advocates *a strategy similar to the Surestart programme*
- Connexions, while being effective in some areas, is too focused on educational issues *at the expense of the social and emotional development of teenagers*
- There is a need for *a new type of professional*, who can work with young people in a variety of ways and who *should be able to offer support, particularly in areas such as careers and mental health issues*
- Facilities and activities for teenagers are often *inconsistent, varying in quality from area to area*

The roles and rights of young people in this changing world are particularly significant and their involvement in their local community is a crucial issue. Increasingly, young people will be part of a society where their every move is monitored, by the use of loyalty cards and RFID tagging systems to track consumer trends, mobile phone finders or CCTV and blacklisting of young people in certain business environments. When library services have become involved in partnership working, especially with organizations like Learndirect or Connexions, they have found that it is a prerequisite that the young people agree that their progress is tracked, since funding now follows the individual and their achievements.

The library, on the other hand, has the potential to be a uniquely welcoming, safe and non-judgemental environment where people's information needs, reading habits and opinions are treated with respect and confidentiality and their achievements and progress are not a matter of record.

What does this mean for libraries?

In the context of these predictions, some of which are quite chilling, the role of libraries is significant. They can be a special place for young people and work with partners such as the Youth Service to help young people engage with their local community. Libraries can offer them the chance to re-engage with reading and through it, exercise their creativity. Young people have to be the key to the future of fertile and supportive communities, rather than the sterile vision outlined above. It is essential that we begin that engagement now, as a matter of urgency.

As, Anne Longfield, Chief Executive of the Kid's Club Network said, in an article²⁹ about lowering the voting age to 16:

We are in danger of recreating and exacerbating the sort of political alienation currently being experienced by young adults. It is not difficult to see how a child who engages with society from a young age is more likely to engage with society as an adult.

Young people involved in the 2020 Vision report³⁰ had a clear view of their priorities, which resonates with the strengths of libraries as the independent place in the community for young people.

We want make our views count, have safe places to go, develop relevant skills and get opportunities to work and learn.

Government policies and initiatives

Library services to young people will have to be developed against a rapidly changing policy background. The relationship between local and central government is very different from ten years ago; there have been fundamental changes to political structures, planning regimes and methods of assessing performance.

The recent strategy rationalisation means that the Library Plans which were vehicles for library services to outline their service developments, have now become position statements and the existing Cultural Strategies have become a subset of the activities of Local Strategic Partnerships. One of the key planning documents now is the Community Strategy and research by the Local Government Association shows that cultural services generally have contributed to 99% of those Community Strategies which have been produced.

Local Public Service Agreements have had an impact on library services, despite the fact that there was no specific mention of them in the original documentation from the government. Several services have received extra funding for delivering against their targets. The Beacon Councils scheme has also featured libraries as a community resource, which gave services the opportunity to display some excellent work..

The new approach to performance assessment, through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), has impacted somewhat on libraries. It does focus on library Best Value inspections, performance indicators and the position statement rating, although local authorities will not be penalised for providing a lower level of service, as library services are not national priorities. To reflect this view, the libraries (and leisure, where appropriate) block is given half the weighting of other services in a CPA assessment.

From a broader perspective, the government has a clear vision of public services which are designed around the people who use them. There is a strong commitment to customer choice and to achieve it sensibly, integration in delivering services is seen as necessary. Achieving truly integrated services requires that partnerships are formed, a shared vision is developed, that there is a mutual willingness to learn, the humility to compromise when necessary and an ability to keep the focus on the outcomes and impact on the recipient, not on professional pride and traditional boundaries.

Integrated working

The Government requirement for integrated thinking, information sharing and working is encapsulated in the DfES Green Paper *Every Child Matters*³¹. This paper and the follow up document, *Next Steps*³², sets a framework for improving outcomes for all children, to protect them, to promote their wellbeing and to support them in developing their full potential through early intervention, accountability, skills and support for parents and carers. As part of the requirements for *Every Child Matters* local authorities are currently mapping services which support vulnerable children and young people. The example below shows how partners can work together to support young people, sharing resources, facilities, information and skills.

YouthBOOX is a national programme exploring how to create palatable routes back into reading for socially excluded 13-19 year olds. It is run by the National Youth Agency and The Reading Agency and fuses the skills and resources of two key partners - youth workers and librarians. Youth workers bring the people reach and skills, librarians bring rich creative reading resources and a massive community infrastructure of buildings and ICT. It's a dynamic mix.

YouthBOOX brings these resources into play at the same time as making reading more enjoyable and relevant by involving young people themselves in shaping their inter-action with reading.

YouthBOOX projects with local authority youth and library services have run in 30 areas over the past five years. The projects have shown the powerful potential of the library and youth work approach to help reluctant young readers discover that reading can be fun and empowering. .

'*Reading is crap,*' says 13 year-old Kelly, mooching on the fringes of a group of young women atop a double-decker bus in Coventry. Her mates, though, are a little more enthusiastic, and, though excluded or self-excluded from school, travel across the city every Thursday to meet two librarians based on the bus as part of the Coventry YouthBOOX project. From the fringes of the group, over the weeks she moves inwards, infected by the developing buzz, picking up and leafing through first magazines and then books. She picks up 'The Little Book of Exam Calm' and is intrigued. Finding a corner of the bus, she reads it from cover to cover. 'I didn't know there were books like this,' she says. 'You want to try this one now,' says a friend, waving a Jacqueline Wilson. And soon, Kelly is engrossed and, with her mates reading out loud the juicy bits, they race through the whole Wilson canon

A Common Vocabulary

The policies which are most relevant to this report, such as *Every Child Matters*³³, *Transforming Youth Work*³⁴ or the various pieces of legislation relating to the 14 -19 curriculum, share a common vocabulary when they talk about young people.

The service approaches advocated centre on principles such as *responsiveness, quality, accountability, integration, partnership and common planning or commissioning frameworks*. In terms of the young people themselves, the language focuses on *information, access, safety, choice, imagination, aspiration, well-being, self -esteem, achieving potential, personal development and active involvement* in both service development and the democratic process.

The strategy group for *Fulfilling Their Potential* audited the main current policies and then matched good practice in young people's library services to the themes and targets to show where public libraries are already making a contribution to government agendas. All the key targets and examples of good practice support wider local, regional and national agendas including educational attainment, neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion and social inclusion. The Evidence File accompanying this report contains the policies and examples of good practice.

Every Child Matters and the Shared Priorities

When looking at how libraries can deliver on the government's agenda for improving the life chances of young people, a good place to start is the five outcomes which young people said mattered most to them when they were consulted about the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*. They are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Economic well-being

However, the strategy group was also conscious of the broader issues contained within the shared public service delivery priorities. Central and local government have agreed seven areas in which it is most important to deliver tangible improvements; most have obvious relevance to young people and their needs. They are:

- Raising standards across our schools
- Improving the quality of life for children, young people and families at risk
- Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities
- Creating safer and stronger communities
- Transforming local environments
- Meeting local transport needs more effectively
- Promoting economic vitality of localities

Once these outcomes have been integrated more fully with the local Public Service Agreements and the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process, they will show that in order to address the more intransigent problems facing us there is a commitment to seamless local and central policies and a drive towards getting all sectors of government working together.

What can and do libraries deliver?

The five service outcomes from *Every Child Matters*, the Shared Priorities and the way in which libraries deliver against them are outlined below, illustrated with case studies.

Being Healthy

Promoting healthier communities and narrowing health inequalities

Libraries are key sources of information in the community and increasingly they are working with their local Primary Care Trusts. The emphasis on giving patients more responsibility for their health and the growth in use of NHS Direct has led to a better understanding of the potential role of libraries in health information. Some libraries have NHS Direct kiosks and others collaborate with local health sector representatives to improve information about issues particularly relevant to young people, such as contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, smoking, eating disorders, drugs and mental health,.

Libraries' provision of access to imaginative literature is also very important. It helps help young people see that their experiences are not unique, and it builds their emotional literacy, helping them work through issues.

If you read Junk you won't have to go and try taking drugs to find out about it – so much better than having a teacher lecturing you.

Cathy, 15, (on Melvyn Burgess' Junk.)

Reading can increase young people's sense of well-being, it takes them out of themselves and helps them to deal with stressful situations.

Reading helps me forget about the stress of school work and friendships.

Adam, 14

It can also help young people with mental health problems gain some relief by looking outside their own situation.

I've been amazed how well the partnership between youth workers and librarians has worked. I'm left wondering why nobody thought of it sooner! As a Sexual Health worker for young people I wanted to see books as a tool to get across a message of self worth,

decision-making and information. With the libraries' support and enthusiasm and love of books we have been able to encourage young people to read stuff that they wouldn't have looked at before. Annie Collins, a Barnados sexual health worker, talking about a Leeds YouthBOOX project working in the city's care homes

These services are crucially important when the statistics about obesity, asthma, sexually transmitted diseases and psychiatric problems are so high amongst our young people.

Staying safe

Creating safer and stronger communities

Libraries, like all cultural services, can have a positive impact on local communities and are often seen as a symbol of local democracy and civic pride. They bring people together, whether in shared activities like reading groups, positive alternatives to boredom or simply a sense of pride in a local landmark which is identified as belonging to the whole community.

Many library services have worked hard to reach out to young people at risk by providing activities as part of the Splash Extra and Positive Activities for Young People programmes for 9-17 year olds from deprived areas.

Libraries can involve young people in activities for their own age group, but also in inter-generational projects which contribute to community cohesion. Minority ethnic young people can find material about their cultural heritage through the library service, and the rich diversity of our communities can be celebrated by everyone through cultural festivals or events like Black History Month.

A key role for libraries to play is to increase young people's awareness of their rights and responsibilities as active citizens and to highlight ways of getting involved in the community and making their voice heard. It is important that this happens outside school as well as within it, in terms of credibility with disaffected young people who are probably the ones who need to understand these issues most.

Libraries' work with young readers can help build a society of involved citizens; it connects them to each other and helps them understand themselves and others.

Link is driven out of home by his spiteful stepfather and forced to live on the streets. It was extremely gripping and made me see homelessness from a completely different angle
Jamal, 13, on Robert Swindell's Stone Cold

BOOX magazine is a national book review magazine produced by The Reading Agency and partner library authorities. All the reviews, articles and reading games are created and written by young people and are sourced from students at secondary schools and youth groups across the UK. It allows young people to express themselves and develop their writing skills. It involves them in the production of a 'real' magazine that is used in schools and public libraries across the country and it increases their knowledge of the publishing world. The contributors get a real sense of achievement at seeing themselves in print.
www.boox.org.uk

Millennium Volunteers have worked in many library authorities. In Warwickshire they support families participating in the national Summer Reading Challenge.

Libraries made a significant contribution to the government's 2002 Splash Extra programme of diversionary summer activities for young people at risk.

In **Birmingham**, which ran an intensive, music-based project, a young woman was found to have an impressive singing voice. In the final performance, attended by over 200 people, she "brought the house down" with her self-penned songs – written on the scheme, drawing from poetry books and novels for inspiration.

She was encouraged by all involved to further develop her unique ability and actively sought out literature around copyright laws, record label and management information and case studies of other local, successful singers. Unfortunately she needed to miss a whole day of the activity because she had an appointment with her Probation Officer, but as a result of the activity her expectation levels of her future increased enormously. (Detached Youth Worker)

During the Splash programme, many library services ran programmes involving artists from the same cultural background as the young people. The African poet, storyteller and drummer Roi Kwabena went down particularly well with the **Manchester** young people – many of whom are from African-Caribbean backgrounds.

His drumming, along with telling traditional stories, really engaged people and was used as a way of making people aware of their cultural heritage and how to find out more about it – whether that is through using books or the Internet etc. Storytelling helps improve social skills and self-confidence – you can be a great storyteller and enjoy stories even if you can't read or write very well. (Librarian)

Enjoying and achieving

Raising standards across our schools

Improving the quality of life of older people, children, young people and families at risk

The case for libraries' contribution to education and learning has been made in many reports and their central role in promoting reading for enjoyment has recently been recognised by DfES's investment in their recreational reading work with young people.

Libraries complement schools' support for young readers. Their wide choice of books and emphasis on reading for pleasure can inject access and reading motivation with profound implications for the delivery of strategies for raising educational standards, improving literacy skills and injecting creativity into education.

Public libraries are the UK's biggest provider of reading – they lend 406 million books a year; the most borrowed author is Jacqueline Wilson. They offer access to reading through a vast network - there are 4,169 UK library sites, supported by 650 mobile libraries. There are 317 million visits to public libraries a year³⁵.

In addition to their support for young people's engagement with reading, libraries have a special role in providing a safe and welcoming environment to support formal and informal learning. Currently, they are offering more focussed study support through homework clubs, which have been found to contribute to improved achievement. The widespread availability of both print and electronic resources in libraries enables them to support information literacy, but the opportunity to range beyond the curriculum, pursuing other hobbies and interests, sits

well with the ambitions of the White Paper: *Raising Achievement 14-19*³⁶ to allow students to pursue their talents and aspirations, whilst maintaining a strong focus on the basics and high-quality vocational options available to all students. The rise in the availability of reading groups and related reader development activities for young people has also had unexpected spin-offs in relation to self esteem and participation.

Book Pushers: Derbyshire Libraries has engaged with and trained young people to act as reading advocates to other young people but also to librarians, publishers, teachers and parents, and on local radio stations. Puffin Books have used their comments on publicity fliers. Evaluation has demonstrated dramatically improved school achievement in some of the young Book Pushers, and comments about increased confidence are commonplace

In the **London Borough of Enfield**, there are four Homework Centres which target Primary school pupils in years 5 and 6 and Secondary school pupils at Key Stage 3 and up to year 11, as well as pupils who lack study facilities at home or need to improve their responsibility for their own learning. Partnerships have been developed with the Out of Hours Study Support Team and individual schools. Last year, a project was set up to encourage the use of libraries and Homework Centres with a group of year 7 boys with literacy support needs and soon, they will be working with looked-after children to encourage children in care to use the Homework Centres for learning and study. They have proved extremely popular with students and provide a place for study which is neither home nor school.

Libraries can contribute to an improved quality of life for young people in many ways, through access to inspirational reading opportunities, by providing a space which belongs to them outside home and school, by offering a quiet place to study and access to information about learning, training, volunteering and work opportunities. Some libraries also provide valuable support to vulnerable young people, whether excluded from school, in care or in young offender institutions.

*Transforming Youth Work, DfES*³⁷ is a key document that outlines the ways youth services work with partners to deliver services to young people. All local authority youth services have been involved in consultation and planning with partners over the last year and each authority has had to submit a plan to their Government Office - rather tellingly only two out of the first fifteen reports submitted mentioned libraries.

If libraries are to be seen as partners on the same level as youth services they must be able to deliver their partners' key objectives and demonstrate that library staff have a recognised skills base to work with young people. Some library services have managed to do so successfully and show the potential for libraries to make an important contribution.

A joint project has just begun between **Rochester and Cookham Wood Youth Offender Institutions and Medway Libraries** to create a programme to inspire reluctant readers and those with limited literacy to develop their skills and the reading habit, then to offer released prisoners from Medway a named contact to ease their introduction to the library service, including its jobseekers service. It also aims to build links and improve networking with the Probation service

Making a positive contribution

*Learning to Listen*³⁸, produced by the DfES but with cross-government support, calls for all services to young people to ensure that there are more opportunities for young people to have a real say and make real choices about the services they use.

This is a common thread running through much of the research into young people's lifestyles and needs, mentioned in Section 3 above. As the *Passing Time*³⁹ report highlights, young people want to be consulted about the services that affect them and the biggest challenge facing public library services is to make that happen. Some authorities are already working within the *Hear by Right*⁴⁰ framework developed by the National Youth Agency. The Youthbox programme illustrates other initiatives which put young people at the heart of decision making.

This approach is now being accepted as good practice in schools and was reflected in a speech by the Minister for State for School Standards, David Miliband, at a conference in Belfast in January 2004⁴¹, when he talked about personalised learning:

Decisive progress in educational standards occurs when every child matters; careful attention is paid to their individual learning styles, motivations, and needs; there is rigorous use of pupil target setting linked to high quality assessment; lessons are well paced and enjoyable and pupils are supported by partnership with others well beyond the classroom. This is what I mean by Personalised Learning.

The strategy group has tried to model a participative approach by involving young people in shaping the outcomes of this report and their views will be even more deeply embedded in the developments which follow. Young people should be involved policy development as well as service provision. A commitment is needed to making the voice of young people heard at all levels of decision making, policy making and planning.

Shropshire County Libraries has initiated a Young People's marketing strategy, in reaction to library membership being low at 4.6% of 15-24 year olds. The strategy encompasses:

- Marketing information to enable campaigns to be monitored; IT systems set up to capture monitoring information
- Improved signage
- Staff training
- Involvement of young people in stock purchase; display and comments book for young people in each library
- Recruitment of young library advocates and mystery shoppers; contact lists of schools, youth clubs etc for marketing campaigns
- Targeted marketing for different segments
- A promise to refurbish young people's areas in a minimum of 6 libraries, with their input

There is still a great deal more to do, but membership in this age group has now gone up to 7.2%.

In recent YouthBOOX programmes librarians have involved young people in working with Barrington Stokes, a publisher of high interest, appealing books for young people whose technical reading ability is low. Young people have been working with the publisher's editors to give feed back on the text of unpublished books and suggest editorial changes.

Economic well-being

Promoting the economic vitality of localities

Transforming our local environment

Regeneration through culture is now an accepted concept. Library visits exceed visits to museums and galleries, the theatre, the cinema, the top ten visitor attractions and football matches.

Libraries have an important role to play in local communities. They can help improve young people's skills and employment opportunities through partnerships with Learndirect, Adult Education providers and Further Education colleges. They can offer crucial signposting and guidance services, working with Connexions advisers. They can guide young people to volunteering opportunities. Where libraries have extended their services to become Learning Centres they can have a real impact on exclusion and support regeneration.

In partnership with Surestart Lowestoft and Lowestoft College, the **ASK Lowestoft Project (Access to Skills and Learning)** undertook a complete revamp of the building and the services provided in the library. Young people were the key partners in designing the layout and design of the library and acted as tour guides and hosts when it reopened. Youth agencies are impressed by the number of teenagers who go to the library on Sundays and are working with the library staff on activities for them. The library service now intends to set up a Young People's Panel for every service point.

Libraries can have a powerful effect on improving the environment and buildings like the Peckham Library in Southwark have won praise for their contribution to the local area and their ability to act as a catalyst for further development. For young people, libraries can be the only facility unequivocally open to them during the evening, on Saturdays and, in some cases, Sundays too. On dark winter evenings they enhance safety for young people too. In a deserted shopping centre or quiet street they are quite often the only building which is light, warm and safe. They can provide a focal point where young people can legitimately meet to share ideas and do school work.

The five outcomes, the shared priorities and the other government policies outlined above encompass ambitions for young people to which public libraries already make a major contribution. Nevertheless, there is the potential for that contribution to be much greater.

Young People and Libraries: Current strengths and weaknesses

Public libraries have a long-established tradition of support for individuals, on their own terms and the library casts a net that catches people missed by other institutions. Libraries provide a much needed space in the community for young people, which is independent, providing a mix of learning, social and creative experiences. They offer support for life skills and can encourage learners who would not learn in more formal settings. In many library services, there is an increasing emphasis on partnership working to bring vulnerable young people back to reading and to support learning:

- 80% of public library authorities run homework clubs⁴²
- 91% of public library authorities run summer literacy activities⁴³

Although many of these activities are aimed at the primary or transition (10-13) age groups, they do have a long term effect and some library services are now extending their provision to include the secondary age group. The same principle applies to reading groups and now 30% of public library authorities run teenage reading groups.

Young people's use of libraries

National data on overall library use by this age group is not collected. However, the *Social Focus on Young People*⁴⁴ report states that the most common activity outside the home for 16-24 year olds was visiting a pub (82%), followed by eating in a fast food outlet (77%), going to a disco (68%) or cinema (65%) or eating in a restaurant (63%) then, at number 6, was a visit to a library (41%), higher than a spectator sport, theme park, funfair or theatre.

As part of the work on *Fulfilling Their Potential* a small sample trawl of library services was conducted. This revealed three main things.

Firstly, it proved almost impossible to assess the percentage of the population aged 11-19 who are active members, partly because the census groupings are 10-14 and 15-19.

Secondly, that statistics are not currently being collected in a way which is helpful to the analysis of use by this age group. Library services do not have a common standard for grouping users under age bands and it is difficult to do more than take a snapshot on any one day.

Lastly, it was encouraging to find that, even allowing for variations in how samples were collected, library usage by young people is higher than the stereotype might suggest. The percentage of the total active library membership made up of 11-19 year olds ranged from 7-24% in our sample. This suggests that libraries already engage substantially with this age group. It is an important platform for growth.

The Strengths of Library Services

In the course of producing this report, the potential for libraries to make a major contribution to the well-being, achievements, creativity and life chances of young people has been recognized by government policy makers, partner organizations and young people themselves. The strengths of library services in delivering against the government's agenda are seen as:

- A massive and uniquely accessible community presence and public interface (3,949 library sites in the UK supported by 655 mobile libraries)
- A space in every neighbourhood which is not school and not home
- A network of outposts and showcases for government services
- Libraries as community shop windows
- A source of support for inspiring, independent and broader reading experiences
- Links with arts, culture and general creativity
- Support for life skills and personal development, including social skills
- An ability to involve and support parents and children
- The capacity to support improved standards in reading, ICT and information literacy
- Key community resources to support active citizenship, civic involvement, volunteering opportunities and community learning
- The ability to work successfully in partnership with workers from other disciplines, to the benefit of disaffected young people

Young people themselves also have positive views about the role of libraries, but express themselves in different terms. Three consultation groups were run as part of the process of producing this report and from these a consensus emerged amongst young people that the positive aspects of libraries are:

- Range and variety of books
- Getting books free
- Support for reading and finding books
- Lots of computers
- Help with homework
- Helpful staff
- Somewhere to chill away from home

Weaknesses of Library Services

2002 MORI research for the Audit Commission⁴⁵ identified barriers to library use as:

- Poor selection of stock
- Outdated reference and ICT facilities
- Poor environment
- Poor access (location, numbers of outlets, opening hours)
- Customer service, unapproachable staff
- Lack of marketing and promotion

The young people consulted for *Fulfilling Their Potential* had strong views about the image of libraries. When asked “what do I think of when I say Library?” the negative images included:

- Dull, boring,
- Dark, never open
- Daunting
- Old, too small
- Not enough new books
- Computers are too busy
- Sometimes the staff aren’t nice

Library services themselves must take responsibility for these negative images, which are not entirely without foundation. Even for young people from homes where reading is a natural pastime and library use has been habitual, library procedures can present a discouraging and irritating face. All readers want an exciting and appropriate range of books and

resources, together with friendly and enthusiastic staff and pleasant spaces. When these are lacking no wonder some of the most needy young people turn tail and are never seen again.

Finally, consultation with policy makers, local government representatives and librarians themselves showed that they were conscious of a longstanding issue about the profile of library services in the context of national priorities. They described:

- A lack of understanding about what libraries really offer, beyond a stereotyped image
- A lack of clarity about what libraries offer in terms of the broader government and partner agenda
- A view that the sector is difficult to work with, because there are so many organisations involved

Fulfilling their Potential aims to address those issues by presenting evidence, arguments and a recommended action plan.

A Vision for the Future

Despite their views about the weaknesses of current provision, the young people in the *Fulfilling Their Potential* consultation groups were also enthusiastic about what libraries could potentially offer and had a vision of their ideal:

- A separate space for different ages and activities
- A library which sits alongside other facilities
- A high quality environment, in terms of design and furniture
- A welcoming atmosphere, open more often and at convenient times
- Walking distance from home, school or a bus stop
- A café area where they can read, talk, play music, without disturbing others
- Wide choice of relevant reading material
- Listening posts for music and talking books
- Computers with internet access
- Quiet spaces and areas where people could chat and read
- Involvement in the design of their libraries and services, including staff appointments and training

The look and atmosphere of the library is very important to young people and the idea of a space specifically for them is attractive, but not too rigidly designated as they want access to all the other services offered by a library. The issue of mobile phones is obviously a potential area of conflict and they felt strongly that blanket bans would alienate them and that individual discretion and mutual trust and respect were needed. They felt that changes were needed to the kinds of people working as library staff. They would like to see more men and young people, and friendly staff, who move around helping people, not sitting behind counters. As one young person said:

It's good if the library staff know where the kid is in him!

They loved the idea of being able to be involved in developing services, especially library design and staff recruitment, and felt that there should be the opportunity for young people to work in their library, perhaps as volunteers. In terms of what they would like to be able to do in the library, they wanted to:

- Help others with reading
- Use IT and office equipment
- Share information with other young people through notice boards
- Join a reading group

- Meet writers and illustrators
- Do courses on reading and writing
- Make websites and newspapers
- Find out about volunteering
- Get help with reading difficulties

Young people with experience of a dedicated youth library felt comfortable with the non traditional roles outlined above. Others were unsure and felt that they might detract from the central focus of the library. Interest in more community based activities varied with the age group, but all groups were keen on activities which directly related to reading and writing. They were positive about buddy reading schemes and unanimously in favour of IT courses. All of them thought that homework clubs were a good idea. The range of books and materials requested held no surprises, including magazines, comics, audio books, newspapers, CD's, DVD's and Playstation games, with the proviso that there was more variety and that they were more up to date.

Information requested ranged from good homework websites to which shops are having a sale, from university prospectuses to reviews of films and books. All the young people were keen on a library website and online catalogues. They also wanted more online book recommendations and search engines to search for appropriate books.

The Benefits of Involvement

Our experience of consulting young people about this piece of work confirmed the view that they enjoy involvement and that their suggestions are sensible and helpful. They would clearly be in favour of being involved in library makeovers, stock selection and staff recruitment, but were realistic about their role. They were also keen on the development of a virtual library space for young people. It was very important to them that the library welcomes them. This means comfortable furniture, library cafes, younger, friendlier staff and more knowledge about books. Their views about noise, food and mobile phones are similar to librarians' views, but inflexible rules on these issues detracted from the appeal of the library.

From our consultation, like most people when asked the question in isolation, the young people showed little interest in the library as a place to get involved in their community or democracy. They seemed to have little faith in politics and little interest in citizenship, rather more in individualism and self-advancement. Experience has shown, however, that when there is a specific issue at stake which is important to young people, such as the Iraq war, they want to express their views. Some of the research quoted above demonstrated that young people feel that their voice is not heard, locally or nationally.

It is possible that libraries could provide something that is missing from young people's lives, but getting them involved, even with the help of experienced partners, like the youth service, is not going to be straightforward. There is potential for conflict of all kinds, but for the sake of the health of our communities, the relevance of local democracy and the re-engagement of the young people themselves in the future, the special role libraries could play must be defined and developed.

Challenges for the future

The evidence which has been outlined shows why young people need to be a national priority for libraries and why they deserve equal access to the best that libraries can do for them. The policy context described the unique services which libraries can offer and the outcomes of the consultation show that libraries can make a difference to young people's lives and to their position in society.

Framework for the Future challenges libraries to develop common and distinctive services. Library services need to take action in four main areas if they are to address these issues and achieve their full potential in serving the needs of young people. They have to:

- Address their weaknesses in the eyes of the young people themselves and make a much more attractive and relevant offer to them (including improving spaces, staff and stock)
- Accept that policy makers have no clear vision of what libraries can do and raise their profile through vigorous activity and advocacy
- Create active and effective partnerships, in order to share relevant skills
- Pick up the challenges of *Framework for the Future* to provide distinctive and universally available services

The four areas are inextricably interwoven. In order to get the benefits offered by libraries to young people, who patently have a need for them, libraries must be more responsive to those needs in designing services and more dynamic in delivering and marketing them. They must take a new nationally coordinated approach to ensure equality of access. Our case studies show that in some areas libraries are:

- Becoming more active and valued partners in the integrated local and national approach to service delivery
- Strengthening their role in nurturing and encouraging participation of young people in their communities
- Promoting reading imaginatively and acting as community champions for the reading experience

If this can be achieved in some places, then the ambitions of all library services should be to achieve the same.

The strategy group for *Fulfilling Their Potential* knows that this will involve time, patience, reallocation of resources and staff development and it will therefore be a progressive process. However, all our research and consultation shows that a commitment to make the necessary changes must be made now. *Framework for the Future* is the first government strategy on libraries for years. It offers an opportunity for library services to play a hugely important role in improving the quality of life of all young people, but to play a very special role in relation to the most vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

Innovative work has shown that libraries can, working in close partnerships with other agencies, transform the lives of all sorts of young people - those in care, in Youth Offending Institutions, with literacy problems, with low self esteem. Disaffected and disengaged young people, many of whom feel that local and national priorities bear no relation to their lives. It is for their sake and for the sake of our communities in the future that libraries must rise to the challenges facing them and:

- Take up *Framework for the Future's* challenge: universally available and distinctive library services
- Deliver on national and local government policies and priorities for 11-19 year olds
- Work in multi-agency partnerships
- Find a successful and meaningful approach to the engagement of young people in how libraries are run
- Become active community champions of reading for enjoyment
- Become the community starting point for young people's participation in society
- Support and stimulate young people's learning
- Help young people develop information literacy and skills for life
- Become the independent place for young people to get information on their own terms
- Have the right spaces, staff and stock for young people
- Reach out beyond their walls through outreach and virtual spaces and services

How to move forward- key principles

In the early stages of the strategy group's discussions with professional groups and government representatives, certain key principles began to emerge. These have been developed and are set out below. They need to be adopted wholeheartedly by library services if they are to fulfil their potential to make a difference to young people's lives.

Participation and involvement

- Young people should be consulted on policy development and participate in the planning and delivery of services
- Public libraries are a natural place in the community to support young people's participation in society and to encourage active citizenship

Places and Spaces

- The public library is a key community facility for young people and they should feel genuinely welcome in every service point. Access should be ensured by much longer opening hours
- Libraries should offer young people services in a mixture of physical and virtual spaces, and through outreach work in different community settings

Planning

- Service development needs to fit with *Framework for the Future's* three themes of reading/learning, digital citizenship and community. These themes need to be integrated
- Libraries should prioritize things they do especially well/better than other providers
- Libraries should develop services which meet young people's needs and reflect likely future trends, including the increase in ethnic diversity amongst this age group
- Libraries should plan service development so that new funding opportunities are seized

Partnerships

- Libraries should develop their multi agency working and be outward looking in the delivery of their services to young people

Priorities and Core Values

- Young people should be able to access an agreed level of services wherever they live, whoever they are and whatever their physical or learning needs. Instant access to suitable materials may be limited in a small rural library or a mobile, but every service point should provide a gateway to the full range of services offered by the authority.
- Libraries must recognize the cultural diversity of our local and national communities and reflect it in their stocks, staff and services.
- Libraries should support young people in developing their information literacy and skills for life, including how to find relevant and reliable information, whether electronic, paper based or via other organizations.
- Young people's services should be aligned with libraries' core values of support for an individual's growth, in response to that person's needs and aspirations. Ease of use, equality and confidentiality are crucial
- Dismantling barriers: libraries should recognize that some young people experience real barriers to library use and work to dismantle these, including having user-friendly library systems

People and Skills

- Libraries should tackle the need to get staff training and recruitment right so young people are supported by trained, knowledgeable and sympathetic staff

Promotion and Advocacy

- Libraries should recognize that for their users' sake they need to gain more influence and support, ensuring that their services deliver on national ambitions and policies. They should develop new ways of demonstrating their impact

Performance

- Library services to young people should have set targets, and services should devise methods to ensure they can measure the impact of services provided without undue levels of bureaucracy. This work should be linked to the development of national impact standards.

The need to address these key principles lies at the heart of the proposed national offers which follow.

The National Offer to Young People

Libraries already offer young people a powerful mix of learning, social and creative experiences. A new co-ordinated approach to developing services within a quality framework could equalize access to this and extend and strengthen their support for 11-19 year olds. It is therefore proposed that a national offer to young people should be made in five specific areas of service:

- The library as *the space* in the community for young people
- Inspiring, relevant reading including creative reading activities
- The chance to get involved and shape the library service
- The library as the place to participate in the wider community and in democracy
- The library as the independent place for information and study support

These are outlined below, with case studies showing how different library services have attempted to achieve these offers in a variety of different ways

1. The library as *the space* in the community for young people, using different models and locations, including co-location with other services, mobiles and virtual library spaces, all with appropriately skilled staff

The Moss Side Powerhouse is a purpose built youth centre, an exciting multi - agency facility – partners are the youth service, the library service, Connexions, and two local colleges. The Powerhouse offers a library, youth club sessions, education and training opportunities, support for excluded pupils, a Connexions hub, sports facilities and a café.

Within the library a lot of work is taking place with young people excluded from the curriculum, with alternative classes supported by tutors booking computers and using study resources.

The Homework Centre in the library provides one-to-one support to encourage young people to complete homework. Children are encouraged to attend by partners in Connexions and the youth club.

Young refugee and asylum seekers have sessions in the library in their own home languages.

Two hostels for homeless young men, between 16 – 25 years, near the library have deposit collections of books and visiting library staff encourage the residents to join the library

Library@Orchard is the sixth community library in a shopping mall, managed by the **National Library Board of Singapore**. Designed for young adults between the ages of 18-35, it was built in 1999, as a lifestyle library, in a busy shopping mall, where young people hang out. Its mission is to change the concept of a library. It is designed in steel and glass and has weekly programmes geared towards the interests of young people. The most famous of these is music@orchard, in which groups play in the library's programme zone, which encourages participation and has refreshments available, Other programmes include IT@orchard and wellness@orchard. There are no children's or reference books and only broad subject terms that are intuitive and facilitate browsing. There are around 130,000 books and more than 400 magazines, catering to the interests and hobbies of young people. It has outstanding multimedia facilities, with CD-ROMS, videos, databases, access to the Internet and Singapore One the world's first nation-wide broadband network. There are six audio booths and it also has piped music.

The Diesel Workshop is a cultural community centre on the outskirts of **Stockholm**, which include an art gallery, theatre and a library that has attracted much attention. As well as librarians, they have recruited a film critic, a role play organizer, a rock musician and a web designer. Whatever their background, the staff are known as library co-workers. The interior is very modern and flexible and includes four full-sized TV game screens. Many of the events held at the library are marketed and set up by the young people themselves. It is open on Sundays and offers a selection of different media, including talking books on CD, Videos, DVDs, computer games, Xbox games, online computers and books, both in English and Swedish.

Lambeth PAYP is co-ordinated by Lambeth Education Business Partnership. Partners include Connexions, YIP, BIP, Youth & Play Services. In 2003 Lambeth Libraries received a grant for £7,500 to provide a programme of summer activities. The activities included photography, singing and performance, drumming & dance, performance poetry and storytelling. The aims were to:

- Help young people develop creative and social skills and to improve their confidence in young people
- Improve & promote the library service offered to teenagers and to increase membership and use amongst the target age group (11 –19) and to break down some of the barriers such as library image / stereotypes.
- Develop / strengthen partnerships
- Reach the target group of NEET (not in education, employment or training)

It was promoted through the Behaviour Improvement Programme, the Youth Inclusion Programme and the Crime Prevention Trust along with youth workers, ACAPS and play schemes.

Video films recorded outcomes -one young man in his evaluation of a workshop said: *"I thought the library was just about books, I didn't know they did this sort of thing. You need to get more flyers and publicity out to tell more youths about it"*

StadtBibliothek Koln (Cologne) has developed a new library concept for young people called For Ju. The idea is to provide young people with their own reading and entertainment spaces in which they can feel at ease, discovering the enjoyment of reading and becoming familiar with library material. Many young people in Cologne now head for the library, to browse, to do homework or use the Internet. They also like to try out new software, for maths or languages and, at the same time, meet and mix with others of the same age. Library staff work intensively on youth-specific projects, co-operating closely with other organizations.

2. Inspiring relevant reading including creative reading activities and support, including young people's stock teams, outreach work for non users and strong links between schools and public libraries

Streatham TRG (Teenage Reading Group) was launched at Streatham library in Lambeth in September 2003. It followed in the footsteps of the Lambeth Reading Re:mix TRGs of 2002. The group runs on the second Monday of each month, kicking off at 5pm as young people (in this case mainly young black men aged 12-14) arrive, chat and wait for the start of the month's activity. Although the budget won't run to providing an artist each month the librarian who runs the group, Asmaa Ansari, is not short of ideas.

In May's group she held a soap opera quiz – such was the enthusiasm for the activity that the young people abandoned the library's new Playstation 2 to join in. Asmaa's next project will be to get the group to design their own notice board to display the work they do, review books and promote the group. The young people are continually consulted on the content of the sessions and will be helping out with future stock selection and choice of magazines. Streatham TRG has 17 members with a core group of 12 coming each month.

Many of the young people were not members of the library before they joined and would not have considered it a place to be. Now, although the group officially finishes at 6pm most of them stay until 7pm socialising, playing PS2, surfing the web or flicking through magazines.

They feel comfortable and welcome in their space in the library because of the TRG. Although initially nervous about working with teenagers, Asmaa now "really enjoys" the sessions and looks forward to them each month. It's obvious that the young people feel the same.

Storyteller Pat Ryan partnered with Reading The Game (a National Literacy Trust initiative that works with professional football to promote literacy) and three football clubs to bring **Kick into Reading** to 2,700 children between March and May 2003. This storytelling project was based upon a successful idea trialled by ex-Chelsea star Peter Rhoades-Brown and Oxfordshire Libraries. Thanks to a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Pat visited Brentford FC, Charlton Athletic FC and Queens Park Rangers FC, where he trained Football in the Community Officers (FITC) to become storytellers. At Brentford, members of the women's first team also participated.

Each club held 15 sessions in libraries for local schools. Clubs provided incentives such as free match tickets for the children, and everyone was invited to come back to the club at a weekend, along with a parent, carer, relative or friend to hear more stories. Initial evaluation of the scheme shows that Kick into Reading made more than 50% of the children involved want to hear more stories. 81% of teachers thought the project might make adults want to tell more stories at home. In addition, children joined and used their local libraries.

A YouthBOOX project delivered by Richmond Libraries involved youth workers and librarians working together to engage disaffected youth, widening their reading and supporting reading skills. It focused on three groups of young people:

- A youth group on an isolated estate with a history of anti-social behaviour
 - A Pupil Referral Unit attached to the Young Offenders Team
 - Young People attending the Vocational Integrated Programme, an alternative Yr.11 programme for young people with behavioural and non-attendance issues.
- Activities included creating photo stories using a digital camera, lyric writing, making a video of the library, selecting books for the library, 'changing rooms' (revamping an area of the library), visit to bookshops, text creation to support GSCE Art.

Lancashire Libraries have developed an exciting extension of the Dads and Lads formula in partnership with the England and Wales Cricket Board. The project has been supported by cricket development officers and professionals from the Lancashire league and community partnerships developed with local cricket clubs.

HOWZAT! Dads and Lads provides schools with high quality cricket kit, fiction books and specially designed work cards to demonstrate cricket skills, reading and research skills.

- Each family is given cricket equipment and a set of activity cards to take home and use throughout the six week project
- The task each week is to practise a cricketing skill and complete a reading activity
- Cricket activity cards have been produced to help Dads and Lads progress through a range of skills from fielding and catching to bowling and batting techniques
- Reading activity cards help you to find out even more about cricket at the same time practising the important literacy skills needed in school.
- A coaching and celebratory event is held on completion of the project

3. The chance to get involved and shape the library service, with young people involved in library design and planning, staff recruitment and training

Norfolk Libraries involved young people in the interview process for two new librarian posts working with young people. Young people from a local school listened to a twenty minute presentation from each candidates about good reads for Years 9/10. The young people were then asked to comment on how well the candidates had presented the book choices and how well they had engaged with the group. This information was included in the formal assessment of the interview.

Barking and Dagenham Libraries worked with a small group of young people as part of their Insight into Management course, asking them to produce a report on services to teenagers. They were briefed on the current situation, the aims of the library service and were asked to look at the teenage area, stock and websites. They made lots of useful suggestions about décor, siting of the area and stock, including teenage magazines.

Stockton Borough Libraries have created a Young Person's Selection Team. They have received training for the role and have visited the Bibliographical Services department, where they were shown how to use a CD-ROM selection tool. They visited a local bookseller and, with support, bought books for their local library and, after a briefing, they piloted book talks, which were then presented to an audience of 60 Year 7 pupils. There was also an award for Young Librarian of the Year. The team is encouraged to continue to meet and to select materials, using the CD-ROM. During 2004-2005, the project will be rolled out and there will be a team in every library.

4. The library as the place to participate in the wider community and in democracy, where young people can find out about volunteering, citizenship, grants and use library resources and facilities to support their activities

X-Factor - Listening to Tomorrow's Voters Today: in 2003 Birmingham Central Library, in partnership with the Youth Service, delivered a project aimed at increasing young peoples; awareness of their voting rights and responsibilities as active citizens. Using the library's People's Network Computers the young people took part in an Internet quiz, listened to speakers from a range of organisations including the Young People's Parliament, voted in mock booths and talked face to face with MPs.

5. The library as the independent place for information and study support, with signposting to specialist information sources, staff trained to offer advice and referral, underpinned by strong partnerships to relevant organizations

The Essex YouthBOOX programme is a partnership between Libraries and YOTS with input from Connexions and local basic skills tutors. The aim is to work with young people between 13 to 17 years with Court Orders, mainly Referral Orders that require offenders to make reparation for the offences they have committed. In 6 hour-long sessions in libraries, the young people work with library staff on a range of skills including IT skills, that will help them complete work for school, Referral Orders and day-to-day life skills, e.g. one young man used a session to complete an application form for a plumbing course at college.

Connexions Tyne & Wear & NEMLAC have agreed an action plan that includes a joint summer activity programme and the production of a Directory of Services to inform all agencies about the local services provided for young people. This will also be used as a training tool for awareness raising amongst all agencies.

National Development Plan

How to achieve all this and more? The team working on *Fulfilling Their Potential* proposes to build on the work done in 2003-2004 by implementing the development plan below. The idea is to arrive at an agreed set of principles and offers to young people, and then to develop the tools and support mechanisms to make the offer a reality for any young person, wherever they live. The national development plan involves a mixture of nationally led work, with support for flexible local implementation.

YEAR ONE 03-04	YEAR TWO 04-05	YEAR THREE 05-06
Visioning: defining the principles; identifying unique library contribution; ambitious aims	Link to study support work and tie into other Framework work incl PAYP, Creative Partnerships etc	Review/assess Share vision work with other agencies and partners – speak at conferences, write articles for press etc
National offers: preliminary dev of key principles and quality framework. Test out with grassroots group and Ascel/YLG/SCL	Further development of framework, underpinned by performance management framework and linked to Standards and Their Reading Futures (See tools below) Complete national baselining/audit exercise to help assess the level of the minimum standard	New standards or quality marks in place. Annual self assessment
Case studies to ground vision in reality/achievability	Pilot some key offers (if possible linked to LGA cultural pathfinders): Pilots to include research and planning process linked to community profiling	Pilots continue; results disseminated at conferences etc, Self assessments complete Roll out
Policy audit to align vision/framework with government aims and Shared Priorities	Produce policy toolkit for profession	Gather evidence of how policy toolkit has been used by library authorities around the country Feedback to government
Strategic advocacy: opening dialogue with policy makers beyond libraries	Develop advocacy campaign to build on new channels of communication opened up– regular briefings, visits etc	Annual meeting with policy makers to achieve buy in
Forecasting and mapping of research	Fundraise for new research – including long term effects of intervention like PAYP; explore LISU/CIPFA stats collection	Research Publication of research

<p>Preliminary consultation with: Young People Profession Government and partners including Connexions and youth service</p>	<p>Develop consultation strategy. Wider consultation including with GOs; regional structures Explore Consultation Fund for wider young people consultation</p>	<p>Publish consultation Action planning from consultation for years 3-10</p>
<p>Key partnerships identified</p>	<p>Strategic partnerships with Connexions and youth service developed</p>	<p>Articles in professional Library and Youth Service press, speaking at conferences, roll out of partnerships at local level.</p>
<p>Identification of tools needed</p>	<p>Develop tools including: Self assessment kit, linked to TRF and other Framework methodologies Fundraise for young people's support network (like EYSN)/ nationally supported peer support network</p>	<p>Regional peer support seminars including visits</p>
	<p>Training linked to TRF</p>	
	<p>Scope possibility of national on line library for y/people</p>	

Quality framework

As this report goes to press, MLA is working on a framework which will pull together all the work of different teams producing work for *Framework for the Future*. This will obviously have a major influence on the next stage of the work on a quality framework to help all libraries deliver the national offers to young people outlined above.

Some initial sample work has been done on developing a progression framework which outlines three levels of the offer to young people, with the minimum being the outcome all libraries would strive to achieve – the national offer. The aim is to achieve a baseline provision which ensures all young people have access to the same “offer” and to raise standards by supporting libraries in aiming higher once the minimum has been achieved.

SAMPLE WORK

	Standard	Medium	Enhanced
The chance to get involved and shape the library service			
<i>Stock</i>	YP views on stock captured through suggestion boxes or web comments	YP advisory group for stock. Meets quarterly or part of teenage reading group activity	YP advisory group with budget or regular stock visits to bookshops/ library suppliers
<i>Staffing</i>	YP involved in staff training.	YP advisory team on recruitment	YP on interviewing panels
<i>Management issues</i>	YP consulted on library issues – surveys, questionnaires, focus groups	YP represented on a forum or Board to oversee library services for YP.	YP Board plans and evaluates library services to YP
<i>Delivery of services</i>	YP involved in developing web content for YP	Library as venue for work placement	YP as library volunteers
<i>Planning</i>	YP consulted on Library Management Plan	YP representative involved with planning events/services	YP plan their own events in the library
Inspiring, relevant reading plus creative reading activities			
<i>Youth service as partners for reaching new reading audiences</i>	Joint training/skill swap	YouthBOOX type project partnership work	Jointly managed YouthBOOX type post
<i>Web tools</i>	Teen page on library website with reading suggestions	YP on stock group/ reading groups/ others post reviews on library website.	National website - YP in libraries contribute to content
<i>Reading groups</i>	Referral and advice service Downloadable starter pack	Access to a group (library based or locally linked) Reading group services like loans, staff to run groups Virtual reading group	Network of groups Targeted work with specific groups e.g. young mums, looked after children etc Links to school reading groups
<i>Reading events, work with authors etc</i>	Teen events included in regular holiday activities/annual events like WBD	Partnerships developed with schools/youth service etc to provide events in other locations	Sustained programme of targeted events throughout year, with partners
<i>The library as the place to participate in the</i>			

<i>wider community and in democracy</i>			
<i>Volunteering/community involvement</i>	Library posts volunteering opportunities in the locality in the library on website	Links established and maintained with local voluntary agencies. Library as venue for volunteer fairs.	YP involved as volunteers in the library eg. study buddies, reading mentors
<i>Active citizenship</i>	Access to e-govt information for YP available at all libraries	Library as venue for YP to meet elected members to discuss local issues	YP represented on ward panel (or local equivalent) meetings held in libraries – chance to meet other YP service providers
The library as the independent place for information and study support on your own terms			
<i>Study support</i>	Homework Help collection – books and other resources in every library. Staff trained to answer basic homework queries.	Targeted Homework Help time with help from library staff in each library	Full time Study Support staff established in several libraries
<i>Information</i>	Basic level of info available virtually and in every site.	Develop core collections –	Branded information collections e.g. Health Information Points Mental Health Points
<i>Partnerships</i>	Made contact with local Connexions Partnership and had a meeting	Developed a joint annual plan and rolled out and evaluated	Co-location of Connexions Hubs and Libraries
The library as <i>the space</i> in the community for young people			
<i>Co-location with other agencies</i>	Connexions advice sessions take place regularly in libraries	Library used as venue for outreach youth work/projects with other YP agencies	Multi-agency partnership established with library as main service provider
<i>Virtual spaces</i>	Full online access by YP to all library resources/information	Library acts as gateway to other community/relevant YP online resources	Library hosts YP local community network
<i>Library spaces</i>	Designated teen area in every library – appropriate location and distinctive signposting If space: comfortable seating/ furniture Feedback forms	Recognizable branding, developed with YP Space provided proportionate to teen population Display areas with magazines/posters At least one consultation group for authority Once centre of excellence for teen provision in each authority. Promoted to all teens	A number of well developed teen libraries Within easy travelling distance for every YP
<i>Trained and approachable staff</i>	YP awareness training carried out with all members of staff	Additional training offered to staff in areas like Homework Help, Reading Groups, outreach work	Each authority to have targeted YP posts

Recommendations

Recommendations for implementation at a local level

Library services should:

- Adopt the following research and planning methodology: complete a community profile of 11-19 year olds, working with the Youth Service or Connexions. Map that against library services provided; identify gaps in provision; consult with young people; create development plan to address needs and gaps; establish a young people's panel to oversee the process.
- Create opportunities for the involvement of as many young people as possible in planning their library services, including stock purchase, library planning and design
- Ensure that methods of collecting statistics about library usage allow this age group to be identified, so that a baseline assessment can be made and progress monitored
- Ensure that library staff have the relevant skills to respond positively to the needs of young people by initiating staff training and development, drawing on *Their Reading Futures*, the national workforce development programme for libraries' work with young people.
- Begin to build partnerships with other services and organisations, such as the Youth Service, Connexions and Youth Offending Teams, in order to harness the power of joint working to support young people, especially the vulnerable and hard to reach groups.
- Review opening hours to ensure that existing resources are being deployed effectively, in terms of the needs of young people.
- Examine the layout and design of libraries to ensure that they meet the needs of young people and become an attractive and compelling space to which young people will be drawn.
- Review how library services are marketed to this sector of the population and refocus marketing activity.

Recommendations for implementation at a national level

It is recommended that:

- The Quality Framework should, after further development and consultation, be adopted as the methodology for achieving the national offer for young people outlined by the strategy group. All library services should be supported in reaching the minimum level of service provision over the next three years, and to progress to higher levels as comprehensively as possible. This would constitute a 3 year plan of action, including pilot projects, roll out and evaluation.
- The strategy group should progress through the National Development Plan outlined. This could include the production of a quality framework linked to the proposed new Library Standards, a national baselining audit, and an updated national resource bank on policy for the profession. Work would be done on collecting more meaningful data and on developing an advocacy campaign with policy makers. Further consultation would be done with young people and partners and tools identified and developed to help library services. Fundraising would be done for a young people's support network (following the model of the Early Years Network) and further avenues for training, research and marketing pursued.

Some Big Ambitions

Finally, the strategy group working on Fulfilling Their Potential feels that the potential for libraries to play a significant role in improving young people's life chances has been curtailed by low expectations and lack of insight and investment by government and by library services themselves. It recommends that there should be an ambitious advocacy campaign, aiming to reach the policy makers who have a very limited view of libraries potential, if they have a view at all. The aim would be to seek further investment to create:

- A national staff training programme to bring library staff together with youth workers and Connexions staff, linked to the generic skills envisioned by *Every Child Matters* and *Their Reading Futures* to encourage truly integrated working
- A national on-line library website/area of the People's Network for young people. A national reading recommendations resource, created by combining the work of young people's stock teams in every authority, could be part of this
- Pilot libraries which would experiment with leading edge innovative services to the most vulnerable groups of young people
- A national makeover programme, led by young people, for library spaces for young people
- Research into how libraries can fulfil a local democratic role in supporting young people's community involvement and sense of place – through the use of existing resources, access to IT, photocopiers, meeting rooms etc.

The challenge is nothing less than a fundamental change in focus for libraries, but attempting to turn ourselves into bookshops is not the answer and would be to deny our unique role. We must aim to create a thriving reading culture in our communities, in a responsive way, which acknowledges that different people have different needs. We have to offer a good quality service to young people who read widely and are book buyers as well as borrowers or information seekers. We have complementary resources to offer which will enhance their lives. However, we must actively involve those young people for whom there is no alternative place to go, in improving our performance in meeting their needs and persuading them that, libraries, like them, need a second chance.

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