

The LIBRARY *Campaigner*

Supporting friends and users of libraries



These kids might save your library!

Very soon, local authorities will run on new rules. We show you one way to use them. The government will demand far more action on youth than on libraries. Councils have a new duty to cater for youth. And public libraries have a successful model youth service ready to use – with a checklist to get you there. This could be a vital tool for library staff and users working to defend – even expand – the public service.



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THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGN – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES:

To advance the lifelong education of the public by the promotion, support, assistance and improvement of libraries through the activities of friends and users groups.



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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Officers and the Executive Committee meet regularly every two months, 1–4pm usually on a Saturday, usually in central London. Campaign members are always very welcome to attend. If you want to come to a meeting contact the Secretary to receive an agenda. We would like to hold more of these meetings in the regions, both to encourage members to come and to help those committee members who have a long journey to London. We have recently met in Lewes, Birmingham and Rotherham. If a local group would like to invite us to meet in their area, we would be delighted to come.

2008 MEETINGS

January 26; March 29; May 10 (AGM); July 12; September 6; November 15.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I wish to join The Library Campaign and enclose a Cheque/PO for £..... for one year's membership.

Name.....Tel:..... Email

Address.....Post code.....

GIFT AID: I confirm that I am a UK tax payer and pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax to be reclaimed in the tax year. I would like my/ our subscription (plus any donation) to be treated as Gift Aid.

Signed..... Date.....

MEMBERSHIP RATES

Individual £15.00 • Concessionary Rate £10.00 • Local Organisation £20.00 • Trade Union Branches £30.00

Local Authorities £200.00 • Company/National Trade Unions £100.00 • Others please write for details

Please make cheques payable to: **The Library Campaign**. It saves a lot of time and money if you pay by Bankers Order.

If you are able to do this please fill in the form and return it to us.

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What we have been up to

It seems such a long time since the last issue that the editor asked me to write something about what we have been doing for the last few months.

The first part of the year seems to have been a lot to do with the MLA's Blueprint for the future. We were asked to contribute to the consultation both by having John Dolan along to the AGM for a discussion/workshop and then by assisting in organising visits to three local user groups (Ore in Sussex, Sandwell and Lambeth.) John wrote an article about his consultation process in the Public Library Journal, which gave us a nice plug.

Unfortunately in the few days before I put pen to paper (finger to keyboard) the new Chief Executive of MLA cancelled the Blueprint before the results of the consultation had even been updated and released. It is to be replaced with an 'action plan'. We wait to see what comes.

At around the same time we had a discussion on the proposed new Performance Management Framework for public libraries. Because the government wants local authorities to have far fewer centrally imposed statistics etc to collect, the Public Library Standards are to be ditched (originally they were to be revised, but that was overtaken by events).

The framework is the nearest replacement, although it will not be mandatory. Again we await the final result of the consultation. Following a discussion at the Executive Committee we met with representatives of the MLA to put our views, which we later followed up in writing.

As ever, most activity has gone on at local level. Once again we are having to respond to local authorities who are

making changes that their users do not like – closures, expenditure cuts etc.

So the campaign around the change of use and layout of Newington reference library in Southwark has continued. Waltham Forest closed St James St. branch in April and a campaign has arisen around that, too. More recently Dudley has announced proposed closures of five branches, including one used by the immediate past Chair of the Campaign (Brian Hall). Unsurprisingly there is a local campaign to prevent this too.

We try to publicise these things on our website but we always need more information about what is happening (hint, hint to all readers.).

The Handbook for Library Friends has gone down well. Copies have gone to many of the local campaigns mentioned above. Northamptonshire libraries have ordered 70 copies as part of their effort to promote local friends groups around their branches. We still have some left but are likely to have to revise the text soon, ahead of any reprint.

There is more that we could be doing – such as speaking at local groups as well as providing support and web coverage. You just need to let us know what you want.

Andrew Coburn

NEW CAMPAIGN PHONE NUMBER

From 1 January the campaign will have new phone and fax numbers. 0870 numbers will no longer work in the way that they have (and give us a small amount of income) so we will be changing to what will probably be an 0845 number. At the time of writing we don't have the new number agreed but if necessary ring my home number (01245 356210) and we will publicise the new number as soon as we can.

THE LIBRARY CAMPAIGNER WINTER 2007–8, No.75

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Make your case!

Unison has sent this very useful campaign leaflet* to all local councillors and Unison branches.

It argues, in blissfully short wording, that public libraries are 'essential to the social, educational, cultural and economic wellbeing of local communities'.

It lists the resources libraries provide for children, students and community groups, and adds: 'Dedicated Unison members provide accessible high-quality services.'

It defines the current dangers thus: 'Tighter resourcing for the whole of local government has focused pressure on local libraries. They are seen as a "minor activity" for many local authorities, which spend only one per cent of their budget on libraries...'

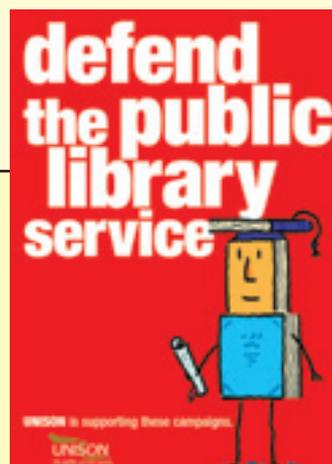
Adverse results, argues Unison, include closures, loss of professional staff, longer opening with no extra resources, fewer books, little money for maintenance and (more controversially) 'a shift away from books to computer services'.

It adds: 'There is a clear conflict between the government's aim of improving opportunities for learning and its desire for efficiency gains in the library service...'

'Libraries must be seen as key to community cohesion and educational achievement, not another privatisation opportunity.'

Unison lists five action points: adequate resources, 'empowerment of staff and communities to shape services together', sharing good practice, 'responsiveness to library users from all backgrounds' and staff training/professional development.

* Copies (A5), plus a petition to 'Defend the Public Library Service', can be downloaded: www.unison.org.uk/localgov/library.asp



Campaign success for VIPs

Providing for blind/partially sighted people is seen by most as a basic duty for any public service. Not least, libraries. But ignorance is widespread, and can be catastrophic for those with impaired vision (VIPs).

On p.16 David Mann lists the VIP book services available – but points out that, even taken all together, there are far fewer titles than sighted readers can access.

But in May, Northamptonshire decided to stop paying subscriptions for its 477 users of RNIB Talking Books.

These would be replaced by the charity Calibre. There had been no consultation with users.

This ‘did not indicate a true understanding of the situation’, says David. ‘In fact, Calibre has existed since 1974, is offered free and has always been available to people in Northamptonshire as much as anywhere else.’ Calibre has 7,500 titles; RNIB has another 15,000.

‘Users protested vociferously, by phone and letter, in the local press and on local radio,’ David reports. ‘Letters were sent to MPs.

‘This outcry, picked up by pressure groups with a wider remit, led to the council changing its mind, or at least its tactics.’ In June it announced that the

RNIB subs would be paid until March 2008, and consultation carried out.

The consultation was interesting. The total expenditure on the RNIB service was £34,821 in 2007-8. RNIB service users were asked what area of expenditure they would prefer to see cut to save this grand sum. They were told that the council’s library service to a Band D council tax payer costs £17.57, compared to £73 for their annual RNIB subscription (that buys unlimited loans, just 70p per loan if you read two books a week). No comparison was made with the cost to the council of an actual sighted user, nor the comparative costs of loans.

Anyway, David adds: ‘You do not offer sighted readers the choice between one section of the library or another. Nor do you say to sighted readers that they cannot access the largest part of the library unless they pay a fee.

Yet VIPs in Northamptonshire were being told just that: if you want access to any of RNIB’s 15,000 titles, pay £73, and continue to pay your council tax. Blind people are such a burden!’

Well, despite the flaws in the consultation, the feedback was uncompromising. And the campaign continued. By September, the council was better informed – and reversed its

decision. Its VIPs can keep their lifeline subscriptions to the RNIB service. They can also use Calibre, adds the council, seemingly still unaware that they always could, and so can the whole nation.

‘We would like to thank the council for listening to the concerns of its service users and supporting their right to read,’ says David.

‘We do have to acknowledge that the arguments are muddled by the different funding models for the two largest voluntary sector services.

RNIB does not recover the full cost of its service from subscriptions: millions are poured in in subsidy. But we do not feel it is wrong to ask the public library to pay towards a public library service.

‘We have pioneered new technology and from the outset used professional narrators and professional technicians. In the past our technology was unique, with its own strengths, but also with the major flaw of being different from anything else. Today’s we use a digital format which is already used in a range of applications, especially in education.’

‘We feel that Northamptonshire was disingenuous in its attempts to make paltry savings at the expense of those already disadvantaged by the lack of accessible books.’

What’s the damage?

With tight budgets threatening a tough 2008 for public libraries, the government has totted up the damage from 2006-7. For the year up to 1 April 2007, in answer to a Parliamentary Question from Dan Rogerson MP, the Department for Culture, Media & Sport supplied figures on closures.

The overall total was 40 ‘net’ closures in England – about 1.1 per cent of the total of 3,573 libraries. As a balance, almost 200 ‘significant’ refurbishments took place. Minister Margaret Hodge added: ‘Library reorganisations can result in better and wider access – for example to take account of where population shifts from one area to another, or where two small, part-time libraries are closed and strategically replaced with a larger new library open for longer hours.’

Where things don’t turn out so well, the minister held out little hope that the Secretary of State will use his statutory power to enquire and intervene: ‘There are currently no plans to use the powers... such decisions are taken on a case-by-case basis as issues arise.’

‘The formal powers of intervention established under section 10 of the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964 have only been used on one occasion, when ministers initiated a review of the public library provision in Derbyshire in 1991. This review did not result in the then Secretary of State making use of his full powers of intervention.’

However, as the result of this famous stand-off was a much improved Derbyshire service, it is not impossible that a message has been noted...

Meanwhile, here’s the score sheet for 2006-7:

LONDON:	closed 5;	opened 5;	net 0
SOUTH EAST:	closed 9;	opened 3;	net -6
SOUTH WEST:	closed 7;	opened 0;	net -7
EAST MIDLANDS:	closed 7;	opened 3;	net -4
WEST MIDLANDS:	closed 7;	opened 5;	net -2
EAST OF ENGLAND:	closed 1;	opened 0;	net -1
YORKSHIRE:	closed 8;	opened 5;	net -3
NORTH EAST:	closed 10;	opened 3;	net -7
NORTH WEST:	closed 17;	opened 7;	net -10
TOTAL:	closed 71;	opened 31;	net -40

Youth is the key!

This year sees a breakthrough in libraries' work with young people, say Ciara Eastell, Tom Holman and Nicky Parker. Is your library up to scratch?

Young people can often find library services hard to access. But a national programme called Fulfilling Their Potential (FtP) has generated a new energy, helping library staff to get to grips with the challenges of involving and consulting them. It has been developed with government funding by The Reading Agency.

The benefits are beginning to show. Staff are discovering what young people want, and are starting to deliver the changes they want to see. And it's far from a one-way street. Many young people are coming forward to volunteer their skills and energies to help.

The FtP pilots have not all run without hitches, but their success is an important step in bringing all library services up to at least a minimum standard of provision for young people.

FtP developed out of the FtP Improvement Framework, a ground-breaking report and evidence file launched in June 2004. That vision remains at its heart – to transform young people's experience of libraries/reading, by creating new interactive reading spaces/services for and with young people.

Direct feedback has informed the programme at every stage. FtP constantly keeps this feedback under review, as needs change over time. But in broad terms, the findings confirm the original 2004 framework. Through workshops and online dialogue over the past three years, more than 800 young people across the country – library users and non-users – have told us that they want:

- a welcoming, safe place to go
- a wide range of fun, interesting things to do
- opportunities to share great books with other young people
- a place to develop personal skills
- the chance to make a positive contribution to the community
- a wealth of information to support study
- guidance about issues that matter to them.

The message is clear. Instead of a passive, solitary experience, young people want to engage with resources –

and with other young people. They want libraries to be about reading, but in a modern, relevant way. They want to have a say about the kind of services on offer.

And they're willing to be involved in the process. Across the country, young people from all backgrounds have pledged their willingness to work with library staff through FtP. The Reading Agency (TRA), working with library services and partners, is happy to help.

We have been supported by a host of partners – the National Youth Agency (NYA), the Museums, Libraries & Archives Council (MLA), the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) and the Association of Senior Children's & Education Librarians (Ascel).

We've produced a menu of resources, and we will encourage all libraries to explore them further (see panel, p. 11).

The FtP Improvement Framework gives staff the support they need to assess and then improve the way their library caters for young people. This year a new advocacy leaflet was launched (see illustration, p. 11). TRA has distributed 10,000 copies to libraries, and to a range of regional and national stakeholders. Further publicity material will be

There's every reason to encourage your library to welcome young people. First, of course, it's worthwhile in its own right. Second, it is now a powerful tool to help you protect local services in general. It's an argument against closing branches. And making a library accessible to young people will make it accessible to everyone else. Above all, there is now strong government pressure to provide better for youth. Libraries are an obvious way to do this. And everyone else can benefit, too!

produced to help libraries to establish positive local partnerships.

The national policy agenda

There has never been a better time for FtP to develop. It firmly supports the government's two strategies to meet young people's needs from birth to age 19 – Every Child Matters and Youth Matters.

Every Child Matters was produced by the then Department for Education and Skills (DfES)¹ after the Victoria Climbié scandal. It has statutory force – leading to mass reorganisations of local authority children's services. It states every child's right to: be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; and achieve economic wellbeing.

Next, Youth Matters – a DfES Green Paper, which is leading to a range of statutory guidance for local authorities. A recent example² stated that local authorities must ensure that young people have access to a range of 'positive activities' outside school hours.

This is, for the first time, a statutory requirement – and libraries can contribute (see Top Tips).

Now a third document,³ *Aiming High*, sets out the government's vision for supporting young people through transforming opportunities for positive activities and through empowerment, access and quality. The strategy combines new capital investment in youth services with an emphasis on volunteering and young people's involvement.

HeadSpace

78 per cent of young people surveyed thought HeadSpace was a really good idea. 68 per cent thought it would help them to read and relax, and 70 per cent would use it to find information for their homework or college work. 85 per cent said they would like to get involved in their local HeadSpace, and 63 per cent thought that young people would benefit from having somewhere to go in the evenings and at weekends.

"I think it's a brilliant idea. You could watch a film, read a book, do some research and congregate with friends."

"This is the best idea I have heard in such a long time!"

"It would be good to have people your own age inspiring you to read."



Photos on this page: end of year celebration for FtP NoW in the Council Chamber, Preston.

FtP chimes with the aims of the Youth Libraries Board (YLB), a new group representing TRA, MLA, DCMS (Department for Culture, Media & Sport), SCL, Ascel, LGA (the Local Government Association) and NYA.

This was initiated by TRA and MLA this year to bring together all the key national players that have a role or a view on how libraries serve young people.

Previously all had been, to a greater or lesser extent, working on their own initiatives for young people. Now they can present a unified voice – both within and beyond the sector. Significant strength will be gained in this way, ensuring that messages – especially to government and Directors of Children’s Services – are powerful and are aligned across a wide range of agencies.

The YLB is also charged with continuing to ensure that the policy on young people’s library services keeps pace with what young people are saying they need.

The establishment of the YLB is a potentially pivotal moment in the way libraries work with young people. Board members met government civil servants creating the new 10-year youth strategy, to make sure libraries are not being missed as potential partners and to make the library Youth Offer clearer to partners.

Central government currently has a clear focus on providing young people

with places to go and things to do. This leaves the door wide open for libraries to act as delivery agents in that process. And next year will be the second National Year of Reading (the first was ten years ago).

Beverley Hughes, then Minister for Children, Young People & Families, recognised the great work going on in libraries when she spoke at FtP’s conference in February. ‘Far from the library being the last resort on a rainy Saturday when they’ve been chucked out

of everywhere else on the high street,’ she said, ‘modern libraries are often the first choice for young people. Libraries often lead the way in the public sector when it comes to tackling disadvantage and challenging inequalities.’

The local policy agenda

FtP fits snugly into local agendas as well. That Youth Matters statutory guidance has triggered a sea-change within local authorities, particularly in youth services.

One key development is that instead of being providers and decision makers, they now have to consult widely with young people on what activities they want.

They must also respond flexibly, by commissioning the most appropriate supplier of those activities (not necessarily themselves). And they have to promote these activities much more effectively than in the past. It gives libraries the opportunity to become a provider of positive activities, and a key community outlet for making young people aware of the activities available.

The Local Government White Paper (*The Campaigner*, winter 2006), meanwhile, highlights the importance of working in partnership with all local residents.

FtP offers the perfect opportunity to make local young people key partners in the ‘community engagement’ the White Paper is so keen to promote.

... continued on page 11



Fulfilling their Potential:

Improvement model for libraries' offer to young people

Fulfilling their Potential is an improvement programme aimed at developing libraries' capacity to deliver services to young people, leading ultimately to a national offer for 11-19 year olds. It presents a timely opportunity to reshape and transform library services, and links closely to *Youth Matters*, the government's strategy for young people's services, which emphasizes the need to develop 'things to do and places to go' for young people in all local communities.

Building on the original *Fulfilling their Potential* report (June 2004), which highlighted the potential of library services to make a significant contribution to the lives of 11-19 year olds, the Improvement Model provides a practical framework for Heads of Library Services to demonstrate the ways in which libraries contribute to the achievement of key outcomes within *Every Child Matters* and *Youth Matters*, as well as highlighting the wider contribution to the *Shared Priorities*.

Every Child Matters outcomes	Shared Priorities outcomes	Fulfilling their Potential outcomes Young people experiencing high quality library services will:
Be healthy	Promoting healthier communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Gain self-esteem ◆ Enjoy better mental health ◆ Make informed choices
Stay safe	Creating safer and stronger communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Feel more confident and empowered ◆ Understand each other better
Enjoy and achieve	Raising standards in schools and Improving quality of life for children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enjoy reading widely ◆ Enhance their creativity ◆ Become more engaged in learning ◆ Develop better skills ◆ Perform better at school
Make a positive contribution	Creating safer and stronger communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Participate more in local decision-making and their local community
Enjoy economic well-being	Promoting the economic vitality of communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Develop better skills, leading to better employment prospects ◆ Become more informed about available choices

The Improvement Model has been developed in partnership by The Reading Agency, ASCEL and the National Youth Agency, with input from the Society of Chief Librarians.

It is set out as a checklist. This lists the 'outcomes' now required under: (1) the *Every Child Matters* model laid down for all local authority children's services; (2) the 'shared priorities' laid down for local authority services overall; (3) the model of service developed in the *Fulfilling their Potential* programme.

Each aspect is described as it would be in a basic service (Standard), and in a service that improves to Medium and then to Advanced level, in terms of provision for youth. This enables library services to assess their current level of provision and identify priorities for service improvement.

A number of support tools are currently being developed to support library staff through the improvement process.

These will include case studies, guidance and training resources, which will be added to *Their Reading Futures* website.

Fulfilling their Potential

– An improvement model to transform library services for, and with, young people aged 11–19

In order to implement the model, library services will need to have:

- ◆ A policy for working with young people, supporting the outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, *Shared Priorities* and *Youth Matters*
- ◆ A commitment to implementing *Fulfilling their Potential* in annual service plans
- ◆ A commitment to working with partners in new local authority Children's Services structures to develop shared targets and/or partnership agreements
- ◆ An allocated budget for improving stock, information and study needs, and reader development activities for young people
- ◆ A commitment to encouraging and supporting staff to develop their skills to communicate and work with young people
- ◆ An identified member of staff responsible for co-ordinating and improving services to young people
- ◆ A commitment to developing a culture which is young person-centred
- ◆ A focus on removing barriers to use of libraries by young people
- ◆ An understanding of the need for the active involvement of young people in shaping improved services

Once these are in place, this improvement model can be used to assess the current level of achievement, and to plan and implement service change and improvement.

INTENDED OUTCOME:**Young people feel the library is accessible, welcoming and value it as a space in the community for them**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>
Young people have access to young people's areas in every library or, if this is not physically possible, a specific timeslot outside of standard opening hours, when they can access the library service.	An area or space is allocated in each library. In small and/or rural libraries, additional after school/college hours are implemented and promoted to young people in the local community.	Young people have access to a designated space, which feels informal and has attractive design and furniture.	A discreet space is allocated. Young people advise on refurbishments and new builds.	Young people have access to at least one centre of excellence in each authority (such as Manchester's Powerhouse), offering a multi-zoned environment with a range of learning and leisure opportunities, specifically geared to their needs.	Work with key partners, where external or internal funding may be available, on proposals for multi-use young people's space. Young people are actively involved in planning for this multi-agency development.
All young people receive a friendly welcome from library staff.	All staff have training in communicating with young people, ideally through partnership with local Youth Service.	Young people have access to a designated person responsible for their services and able to respond to their needs.	Young Person's Officer, focused on working with young people to develop and deliver library services, established. Name and contact details on display in every library and via the website.	Young people assess the quality of the library service's welcome and make recommendations for improvements.	Young people act as mystery shoppers and shape and undertake other service evaluation. Young people involved in staff training, recruitment and selection.
Young people find it easy and appealing to join the library.	Simple, well designed joining procedures, lack of bureaucracy, well promoted through schools and other partners.	Young people can use their library membership to gain access to other services and/or gain concessions/incentives through using their library card.	Partnerships with other providers, including 'Opportunity Card' developments.	All young people receive automatic library membership.	Smart card developments provided via schools, youth groups, etc.
Young people are aware of what the library can offer them.	Library publicity is developed with young people and made available to schools & youth groups. Virtual links to library service website available from the websites of key partners.	Young people at risk know what the library can offer them.	Partnership projects supporting and involving young people at risk.	Young people work in partnership with library managers to shape services, and any accompanying publicity and marketing materials.	Young people's advisory group to input into library decision-making, policy development and branding.
Young people have access to library and reading web pages, targeted at their needs.	Young people advise on content and design of web pages. Links to library web pages from school and college libraries.	Young people actively create content for library web pages.	Young people contribute reviews, articles etc. Young people have access to web authoring & design training.	Young people access a virtual library service targeted to their needs from home, school, and college.	Virtual service with active involvement of young people, including online membership, 24 hour online enquiry service, offering help with homework and information enquiries.

INTENDED OUTCOME:**Young people feel confident and able to make informed choices about their lives**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>
Young people have free access to a range of up-to-date information sources, both online and hard copy, on a wide range of appropriate subjects and support from library staff to access the information they need.	Library managers work with key partners to join up information resources for young people, both online and in hard copy. Library staff trained to demonstrate basic information literacy skills to help young people find the information they need.	Young people know that the library can provide good quality and up-to-date information and can signpost them appropriately to other agencies, such as Connexions.	Young people advise on the information they require and how it should be promoted. Training for all information staff in communicating with young people. Working with key partners to signpost the library as a place of free information for young people. Promotional material designed by young people.	Young people have access to individual support, signposting and guidance through libraries.	Branded information collections with a well developed network between information providers, which can provide young people's advice services on site in libraries (eg Connexions) on a permanent or surgery basis.

INTENDED OUTCOME:**Young people participate in their community and in wider democratic activity**

<i>Standard</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>
Young people have the opportunity to get involved in the library service.	Work placement and/or volunteer scheme for young people. Opportunities for young people's involvement in their local library are promoted through schools and other key partners.	Young people are actively involved in decisions about service planning and delivery.	A range of options available, including selecting stock, developing content for web pages and recruiting library staff. Library service assesses its provision using NYA's 'Hear by Right' framework and builds its capacity to involve young people in library services.	Young people are formally empowered to take decisions in relation to planning, prioritizing, delivery and evaluation across the range of services to young people.	Young People's Management Advisory Board or other advisory group empowered to provide ongoing advisory input to library managers and to make decisions, where appropriate.
Young people feel able to access information on their local community and wider democratic issues.	Targeted promotion of People's Network computers as gateway to other Council services and e-government. Information & signposting to encourage young people to engage in community activities, eg Year of the Volunteer, Local Democracy Week, etc. Partnerships with other local authority departments to promote relevant opportunities for young people, eg Trading Standards – 'Young Consumers'.	Young people are able to get involved in local community and democratic issues through contact with the library.	Links with local volunteer service to encourage awareness and promotion of local volunteering opportunities to young people via the library. Library made available and promoted as space for local community and democratic activities, including young people's surgeries with local politicians. Free use of IT, meeting room and other resources to support young people's community involvement activities.	Young people are actively involved in shaping their local community through contact and participation work with the library.	Library provides free meeting space for youth council meetings, activities, debates and question times. Young people are supported in adopting NYA's 'Act by Right' framework. High profile library activities for young people during Local Democracy Week.

INTENDED OUTCOME:

Young people enjoy reading widely and feel inspired to share their reading with others

<i>Standard</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>
Young people have access to current, inspiring, well promoted collections of books and magazines in every library, targeted to their needs.	Adequate budget for young people's stock and magazines. Young people advise on stock through a variety of means, eg suggestions scheme.	Young people assist with selecting and purchasing stock for libraries and, where appropriate, outreach collections for use in other community locations.	Percentage of budget 'earmarked' for young people to select stock. Regular visits to bookshops/ library suppliers/websites to select resources. Identify and build partnerships with suitable community locations for outreach collections.	Young people actively promote their selections to other young people.	All purchasing for young people is done through partnership work with the young people themselves. Promotional campaigns and resources created by young selectors.
Young people are able to extend and develop their reading choices.	Access to booklists, review magazines, websites in libraries, schools and youth groups. Well promoted reading recommendations from other young people through a variety of means.	Young people are actively involved in sharing their enjoyment of reading with other young people.	Library staff support young people to set up and manage reading groups and other creative reading activities. Programme of regular author / illustrator / creative reading and writing activities, linked to regular holiday activities/annual events.	Young people at risk are actively involved in sharing their enjoyment of reading with other young people.	Youthbox type post, funded with other services, such as Youth Services, to involve and support young people at risk in a range of creative reading activities. Sustained reading projects / activities with specific target groups, eg young mums, children looked after, etc.

INTENDED OUTCOME:

Young people develop their skills and become confident and motivated learners

<i>Standard</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>	<i>Advanced</i>	<i>How to achieve</i>
Young people have access to study facilities and help in the library to meet their learning needs.	Library staff trained to help young people develop study, research and 'learning to learn' skills. Designated study tables and IT workstations for young people. Access to Homework Help collections, both hard copy and online, in every library.	Young people, including those at risk, have access to a range of programmes and resources and use these to support their wider learning needs.	Access to library based Homework Clubs and Study Support staff, either library run or in partnership with other agencies. Work with key partners to shape learning services for 11-19 year olds and to signpost the library as a venue where learning can take place and/or learning resources accessed. Access to adult learning courses with tutors in libraries for older young people (16+).	Young people support and help others to develop confidence and skills in learning.	Young people trained as study buddies. Young people provide support activities, including mentoring and coaching. Zones for group work or class room facilities.

LINKS

Every Child Matters: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Hear by Right: www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright

Fulfilling their Potential report (June 04): Available from the Download Centre at www.readingagency.org.uk

For more information about Fulfilling their Potential, please contact Ciara Eastell, Senior Adviser, The Reading Agency on 07812 637525 or email ciara.eastell@readingagency.org.uk.

Youth Matters: www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth/

Their Reading Futures: www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk

Pilot projects

FtP is already making a big impact. In particular, we have a far clearer understanding of how a national, co-ordinated programme can effect change at local level. The combination of supportive resources, staff training at all levels, partnerships, regional alliances and help in putting ideas into practice is already paying off. Latest Cipfa figures on public libraries show that children's loans have increased – by two per cent in 2004-5 and another 1.5 per cent in 2005-6.

Some of that success can be attributed to the concerted push of national programmes, of which FtP is one. There is no reason why loans should not continue to rise with continuing activity.

Included in that activity are pilot projects based on the FtP Improvement Framework. Young Voices is a lottery-funded youth volunteering project in three library authorities in the North West: Manchester, Halton and Oldham. It is led by CSV (Community Service Volunteers) with input from TRA.

In the South West, Partners for Change has helped libraries reach socially excluded young people, including teenage mums and people from travelling communities. More than 200 11-to-19-year-olds have helped plan new services in Dorset, Gloucestershire and Swindon, and given staff a better appreciation of their needs.

In the North West, 22 library authorities have joined forces as FtP NoW, piloting different aspects of the FtP Improvement Framework. Projects include 'mystery shopper' visits by young people and getting them to select new health information resources. A similar joint project has just started in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

For Manchester City Libraries, their FtP project has been central to their engagement with young people (see panel story, p. 12).

Tools to help you

That new statutory duty to give young people positive activities

Get the exact wording: Statutory Guidance on Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act (Positive Activities for Young People), January 2007. See www.participationworks.org.uk/News/January2007/ObligationforPositiveActivitiesBecomesLaw/tabid/218/Default.aspx

The National Youth Agency has developed a framework for all types of services to 'assess and improve practice and policy on the active involvement of children and young people'. It's called the Hear by Right framework, and has been widely piloted and used. Library services can also benefit from using it. See www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright.

TRA (The Reading Agency)

The Reading Agency has a raft of resources available online (www.readingagency.org.uk) to help library users get updated on youth issues and FtP, and get ideas for improving libraries' work with young people. They include:

The FtP Improvement Framework

This is a complete toolkit for libraries to assess their current provision for young people and identify priorities for improvement. There is a useful introduction, plus a chart neatly outlining what a service needs to do, from making the place feel welcoming to getting young people to read more. For each item there are practical ideas for what is needed and how to provide it – to a 'medium' standard or an 'advanced' standard. Gold dust!

Their Reading Futures

This is a training programme for librarians (and others) in working with young people. Much of the content is available online (www.theirreadingfutures.org.uk). It includes:

- Case studies and guidance notes about best practice in all aspects of working with young people
- Advice for staff about engaging with young people
- Tips on making libraries appealing and attractive
- Advocacy leaflets (illustrated)
- An evidence file of FtP in action
- Reports on FtP's achievements so far and news from pilot FtP projects
- Presentations from the Reading Agency's recent FtP conference
- Details of opportunities for libraries to work with new partners and colleagues on a regional basis
- Other resources are available for download at www.readingagency.org.uk



Building on success

The next step is to spread FtP across the country. The launch this year of HeadSpace is a key development. HeadSpace will be a bright, lively place inside the library where young people can relax, read and try new books – a powerful combination of café culture and library service.

Crucially, young people will be involved in every aspect of setting them up, from design and marketing to acting as 'Book Waiters' and choosing what books are 'served'.

We see HeadSpace as 'the consumer expression of the FtP Improvement Framework'. It contains all the elements libraries aspire to achieve (as articulated in the Framework, and confirmed by research with young people).

It is a new model service – a modern reading service that is not just for young people but shaped by them. This intensive engagement will be transformational for both libraries and for young people – every young person will be eligible for formal accreditation for their work.

It has now won a grant from the lottery's Young People's Fund. This is enabling us to set up a network of 20 pilot HeadSpaces over the next three years in: Buxton, Corby and Worksop (East Midlands); Halewood, Knowsley, Halton Lea, Haslingden, Bolton and Longsight (North West); Southampton, Folkestone, Crawley and High Wycombe (South East); Weston-super-Mare,

Swindon, Plymouth, Bristol, Lyme Regis, Melksham and Padstow (South West).

The first HeadSpace opened on 20th August at High Street Library, Bolton, and seven more 'prototypes' are scheduled to be launched by April 08.

The HeadSpace locations cover a range of different settings, chosen to give maximum benefit to young people.

Because this project is significantly larger and better funded than the other pilots it should have more impact. It also represents the culmination of lots of learning within the FtP team. We call it a next-stage project.

Another key element is our project to develop a new reading website for young people. This aims to combine libraries and strong content with online web 2.0

tools that are so popular with young people.

TRA has done focus group and online consultation work for this new resource, which will also be the home of HeadSpace online. It will use the power of web networks, blogs and podcasts to generate and sustain interest in reading.

The initial development will be funded by TRA. As it will be a promotional resource, it should recoup its costs from sales. It comes within the FtP umbrella because it builds on the

evidence base that TRA has developed through FtP.

This project shows how FtP is working with young people online as well as off, bringing libraries and books into their networks. There is more work to be done before libraries and young people speak fluently in the same language, and we are not complacent – not all barriers have been overcome. But we are optimistic that FtP can make a real difference.

It adds up to hugely exciting times for libraries and young people. We hope you will join us on the journey.

Ciara Eastell is Senior Project Manager, Fulfilling Their Potential, at the Reading Agency.

Tom Holman (tomholman87@hotmail.com) is a freelance journalist.

Nicky Parker (n.parker@manchester.gov.uk) is Head of Library and Information Services, Manchester City Council.

Claire Styles is currently leading on FtP for The Reading Agency (Claire.styles@readingagency.org.uk)

References

- 1 Now the Department for Children, Schools and Families.
- 2 Statutory Guidance on Section 6 of the Education and Inspections Act (Positive Activities for Young People), January 2007. See www.participationworks.org.uk/News/January2007/ObligationforPositiveActivitiesBecomesLaw/tabid/218/Default.aspx
- 3 Aiming high for young people: a ten year strategy for positive activities, July 2007, See http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/tenyearyouthstrategy/docs/cyp_tenyearstrategy_260707.pdf

Manchester leading the way

Manchester is one of the library authorities keen to embrace the challenge of FtP. The Powerhouse Library in Moss Side has been leading the way. The Powerhouse is a partnership building with a range of agencies (including the library) involved in running it, plus a management board. By getting young people represented on the board, they have been actively engaged in staff recruitment, stock selection and governance arrangements.

Nicky Parker, Head of Libraries in Manchester, thinks their contribution has been invaluable. She now wants to develop similar participative activity across the city. 'We're looking forward to a richer engagement with Manchester's young people through developments such as HeadSpace.' Longsight Library, based in a part of the city that is home to a high proportion of the Asian community, will be fully refurbished and reopened with one of the first wave of HeadSpace, including a volunteer programme to get young people to actively promote reading among their peers. Manchester is also working in partnership with CSV and TRA in the Young Voices pilot volunteering programme, as is neighbouring Halton.

'There's real interest in developing programmes like these in libraries throughout the North West region, says Nicky. 'Twenty-two library authorities are already working closely on FtP NoW, which has seen a major staff development programme begin to shape a new relationship between libraries and young people.'

The project has focused on the five outcomes of the FtP Improvement Framework, and is consulting with young people to develop new ways of working. The regional FtP NoW programme, supported by SCL North West and managed by The Reading Agency, has built a strong partnership between the library authorities, the Regional Youth Work Unit, the National Youth Agency and MLA North West.

The benefits of working together have been immediate. 'Staff teams from across the region have been sharing their experiences and ideas. Peer support has been crucial in pushing forward the boundaries,' says Nicky. A regional board has been established to steer the work in the North West. There are further plans to develop a further two-year programme with a particular focus on developing relationships between youth services and libraries.

In Manchester, the work is beginning to pay off. Performance figures are rising and resident satisfaction with libraries has dramatically improved. 'Young people have been central to our recent bid to the Big Lottery Community Libraries Fund,' says Nicky. 'As we continue to refurbish and build new libraries in the city and improve library services, we will embed working with young people into those plans.'



David Lammy, minister for libraries (now, alas, gone) visited the Powerhouse.

Too many Friends groups have to spend all their time and ingenuity trying to find out what is going on – or trying to persuade library managers that it wouldn't kill them to get involved with their own users. In more enlightened areas, Friends get the chance to make a positive contribution.

Living history

When library staff take an interest, Friends groups can work wonders. Juliet Oliver, Service Development Librarian, describes one ground-breaking project in Kent.

March 2006 was a busy month for the Friends of Crayford Library and their new Crayford Town Archive. Not only did they attend Bexley's local history fair for the first time, but they also officially launched their archive on the web. A year later they were at the history fair again, still making new contacts among the 1,000 visitors. The collection of stories and illustrative material is still growing.

The Friends meet monthly to hold talks and events, or help out with library activities. They have also been very keen to promote Crayford's historical heritage, and were looking for a way to reach a wider audience.

The project was helped on its way by Simon McKeon, Bexley's Local Studies Manager, who put the Friends in touch with Awards For All (a Lottery fund distributor) and Commanet (an online archive service).

Simon says: 'Crayford Town Archive project will benefit the community enormously by making available a wide selection of historical material and generating interest in the town's history. It's also encouraged some of the Friends to learn new IT skills, and the library service and its Local Studies Centre have enjoyed working in co-operation with the group.'

The Friends spent many months recording the memories of local people, collecting photographs of the town and establishing links with other groups and residents in Crayford.

Dyanne Jarrett and her husband Dennis have been instrumental in establishing Crayford Town Archive. Dyanne says: 'The Friends of Crayford Library first began this project after being inspired by a lecture we'd arranged by Ted Thomas, the local historian.

'He gave a fascinating talk on the changing face of Crayford, and stressed

To see some of Crayford Town Archive online go to www.commanet.org.uk, search the archive and type Crayford in the subject box.

The Friends of Crayford Library can usually be found in the Library Hall on Monday afternoons – contact Crayford Library on 01322 526050 for more details, or contact the project directly by email at craylibfriends@yahoo.co.uk

the importance of recording people's memories before they were lost forever. "Old" Crayford residents are fast disappearing and we are losing their unique memories...with the rapidly changing face of towns like Crayford these days, it's important to recall and retain their origins and heritage. We began to take an increasing interest in our local history, and the value of preserving it.

'So, lo and behold! – we were delighted to work with Bexley Libraries & Local Studies in setting these ideas in motion. They put us in touch with Awards

for All, and soon we were successful with our application. We purchased various pieces of equipment – laptop PC, digital camera, MP3 player, scanner etc – that enabled us to start the project off. It also helped pay for some training from Commanet staff, so we were able to start adding some of our photographs to their online resource.

'We named the project Crayford Town Archive, and off we went! We've collected photographs and memorabilia from various local sources, and aim to collect much more in the future to enlarge the archive. (We only photograph or



Denis and Dyanne at the history fair

record material, we don't actually take anything from our donors – just preserve and promote!)

'And it's not just Crayford's past – we're also aware of the importance of contributing to the town's future too, and its sense of identity. That's why we're also keen on working with schools, so that local children feel some sense of belonging to Crayford too.

'The archive project has proved to be a very enjoyable experience for us all, and has led to us meeting some fascinating local characters who've lived here all their lives. We've certainly learned a lot

more about our town! We hope at a later date to take the archive out into the community, particularly to senior citizen's groups. We'll also put together a special package for schools so that they can appreciate more about life in the past.

'We had a brilliant day at the Local History Fair – hard work, but fun! The whole project involved a good deal of work, but we've enjoyed it enormously... and when you actually hear someone telling you about a local event or see it in a photograph it makes it so much more real.'

Senior Librarian Will Cooban, who helps run the Friends of Crayford Library, adds: 'I'm so pleased for the Friends that they've succeeded in this project. I think they're the first Friends of Libraries group in London or the south-east to take on a project like this – and the results have been outstanding.

'I've thoroughly enjoyed working with them. Dyanne and Dennis in particular deserve great praise for all their efforts – but I'm sure they've enjoyed themselves too! They are certainly making a significant contribution to Crayford, its history and its identity.'

Ebenezer – a friend of libraries

Sometimes, Keith Morris points out, Friends/users can even find time to concern themselves with books...

Joining a Friends of the Library group does not need a government health warning, but it could risk venturing along some strange byways of history.

Some time ago, a talk was arranged in Rotherham (South Yorkshire) about a local poet called Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849). Those who attended were surprised by the good turnout, and the view was aired that while there was interest in the poet, information was hard to find. 'Something should be done about it,' said Eric Hirons-Smith, a committee member of the Friends of Rotherham Central Library (FRCL).

Soon FRCL had constructed a lottery bid aimed at promoting interest in Ebenezer Elliott. Samples of the bard's poems would be sent to FRCL members & also to local celebrities, asking for their thoughts on the poems. Another group, Friends of Archives, would research the life of the poet.

All this activity would result in a publication of the poems, together with all the comments received. This would be supplemented by a short commentary on the life of the poet. Disappointingly, the lottery bid failed.

But this was not the end of the story. The editor of FRCL's newsletter was a retired librarian from Sheffield Libraries, Keith Morris. Keith had now become sufficiently interested in Ebenezer Elliott to talk about writing his own book on the Corn Law Rhymer. Rotherham Libraries intimated that they might be interested in publishing the book under their local history imprint.

And so it came to pass that a member of FRCL produced a volume called *Ebenezer Elliott: Corn Law Rhymer & Poet of the Poor*. The book was published by Rotherham Libraries, which makes it an interesting piece of library co-operation. (Available from Rotherham Archives tel 01709 823616, price £7.50).

Elliott was not just a poet, for he campaigned vocally to repeal the hated Corn Laws and he was active in politics, both locally & nationally – even achieving an international

reputation. Clearly, more research was needed into this complex character and his political activities.

Soon appeared a new book with a difference. *People, Poems & Politics of Ebenezer Elliott, Corn Law Rhymer* was a limited edition of 54 copies, each numbered and signed. The idea was to make the book seem out of the ordinary and to give it a novel appeal. This might compensate for the niche subject.

In addition, as the author self-published the book, he was able to keep costs down, making it affordable at £4.99. Another difference was making the book a World Exclusive to the local bookshop – Amazon did not get a look-in! The book sold quite well but there are still two or three copies available. (If anyone is interested, please ring Philip Howard Books on 01709 365402).

Ebenezer Elliott was an ordinary, half-educated man who believed passionately in the value of learning and self-improvement. *People, Poems & Politics of Ebenezer Elliott, Corn Law Rhymer* revealed Elliott as an early champion of the People's Charter.

He always fought for the rights of working people and he was an early advocate of free libraries. As vice-president of Sheffield Mechanics Institute, the bard did much to help educate his fellow citizens. He took the lead in setting up a reading room for members of the institute. He even donated 22 of his own prized books to help the project off the ground.

Now, if the Corn Law Rhymer was alive today, this remarkable character would have been in the front of the campaign to keep libraries open and freely available.

Would he have joined the Friends of Rotherham Central Library? You can bet your life he would! With his support for working people, his hatred of injustice & his single-minded determination, he would probably have been Chair, Secretary and Treasurer too!

Keith Morris
keithm@judandk.force9.co.uk

Libraries for all?

'VIPs' is the accepted abbreviation for people with visual impairment (blind or partially sighted). But not enough public libraries treat VIPs as very important people, says David Mann of RNIB (Royal National Institute of Blind People).

Some two million people across the UK have a significant degree of sight loss – enough to make it difficult or impossible to read newsprint or recognise a friend across the street. We cover the entire age range, but four out of five people with sight problems are aged 65 or over.

It could be you, sooner or later! One in five people over 75 has a significant sight problem. Most people know an elderly friend or relative whose sight has seriously deteriorated. More often than not, sight loss creeps up on you, rather than happening dramatically overnight. Avid readers and casual callers alike will

be lost to the public library service, if they think it no longer has anything for them.

What do people with sight loss want? Well, surprisingly, the same as everyone else! Information, inspiration, escapism, the joy of reading, the satisfaction of learning. So it isn't really a question of 'special needs', but of tailored solutions.

People with poor sight (or no sight) read through vision, sound or touch. Some can still read ordinary print, but not fluently, and need magnifiers and good lighting. For others, large print is part of the answer – although what is large enough for some will be too small for others. Audio is another channel, with tapes fast disappearing and being replaced by CDs. Braille remains invaluable to those with the opportunity and motivation to learn it.

However, there remains one huge barrier to reading books – there aren't many about! Less than 5% of published titles ever find their way into an accessible format (large print, audio or Braille) either through the voluntary or the commercial sector.

Research conducted in 2004 for RNIB by Lisu (the library statistics unit at Loughborough University) found that even in fiction, only 8% of published titles were available in Braille, 12.5% in large print and 15.7% on standard audio cassette (this was the highest figure among the various audio formats at the time). The percentages of titles available on topics such as cooking or gardening was minuscule – below 1% for some formats.

In the face of this book famine, it seems to us incumbent on public libraries to ensure that titles that do exist in an accessible format should be readily available to VIPs. This can be achieved partly through their own purchasing priorities (e.g. if you can only afford one copy, buy a large print one). But also key are interlending through conventional library channels, and accessing titles from voluntary sector services.

Easily the largest source of audio

Is your library service to VIPs this good?



In Stockport, libraries held VIP Days where users could try out spoken word and magnification tools on the computers (with the help of a specially made how-to-do-it audio-cassette) and browse alternative format books and audio-described videos. A VIP reading group meets monthly at Chatham Library to discuss talking books.



books is the RNIB Talking Book Service. Yet it is precisely in this area that a number of library authorities pursue a flawed policy. The cost of running this substantial enterprise is considerable – we now have over 15,000 titles. As RNIB is a charity, we are obliged to charge a subscription to reduce the subsidy we pump into this service.

Some local authorities refuse to pay for people in their area. They point to other voluntary sources that are free at the point of delivery, and suggest that those, or the books on their own shelves, are ‘enough’. They fail to appreciate that, to achieve anything approaching equity, VIP users should have access to all the titles available. Even then, the choice will be much more limited than for a fully sighted person.

In the library itself, much can be done to make both books and the internet more accessible. Good task lighting is particularly rare, but can make all the difference. Closed circuit TV reading devices can magnify to suit an individual’s needs. Scanners with speech can also assist.

As for computers, they can talk, enlarge their display or alter its colour and contrast, or even be linked to a Braille display. For many, the modest magnification and speech programmes in mainstream packages may be adequate.

Access technology packages can open up the web and allow people to send and receive emails (although this may be hindered by an authority’s corporate IT policies). The cost of getting online at home is higher for VIPs, as they need additional access technology and customised training.

The building itself is also important. If it is dingy, poorly lit or poorly signed, people with sight loss will be put off. But then so will everyone else. So, as in so many cases, modifications designed primarily to help people with a disability will in fact benefit everyone.

Why should libraries worry about including VIPs? The Disability Discrimination Act 1995, amended in 2005, now obliges public bodies to take positive steps to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination. Your council’s Disability Equality Scheme, including a section on the library service, should have been drawn up in consultation with disabled people. It should include an action plan against

Resources ...

RNIB and the National Library for the Blind merged at the beginning of 2007 and now run the RNIB National Library Service. This offers Braille and audio (including talking books and a range of other formats and forms of delivery). We are always looking for new partnerships with the public library sector and local authorities. RNIB also supports the Right to Read campaign to get more books into alternative formats, and the annual Make a Noise in Libraries week to publicise public libraries’ services for VIPs.

See: www.rnib.org.uk/libraryservices or contact Pat Beech, Library Services Manager: pat.beech@rnib.org.uk (0161 355 2005).

- **Calibre Audio Library: audio books for loan, originally cassette tapes but now also increasingly MP3. See www.calibre.org.uk or contact: Elizabeth.twining@calibre.org.uk (01296 432339).**
- **Revealweb: this database tells you if a particular title is available in any accessible format, and if so from whom. It also lists all organisations producing accessible titles, from the largest to the smallest. Revealweb is gradually being incorporated into the Unity-Uk database. See www.revealweb.org.uk or contact Helen.Brazier@rnib.org.uk (0161 355 2003).**
- **Gateway: the Gateway Project has a network of ‘champions’ in individual library authorities to promote the interests of VIPs. It has also arranged regional workshops and offers information and advice. Although the funding for this project, generously provided by the Ulverscroft Foundation, has come to an end, the service is still being provided via the RNIB National Library Service. See: www.gateway-uk.org or contact Deborah.Ryan@rnib.org.uk (0845 075 0089).**
- **STV (Share The Vision) has campaigned for better services for VIP library users for over 15 years. Its board represents statutory and voluntary sector stakeholders, and – importantly – has always been chaired by a representative of the Society of Chief Librarians (currently Mark Freeman, South Tyneside). Contact Helen.Brazier@rnib.org.uk (0161 355 2003).**

Don't delay, book an eye test today! RNIB urges everyone to have a full eye health check at least once every two years. In this way many degenerative conditions such as glaucoma or macular degeneration can be spotted at an early stage, and sight loss halted or delayed.

which service providers can be called to account.

The Public Library Standards, at least in England, seem to be moving towards vaguer measurements. We trust that the impact on people who cannot read normal print or see standard computer displays will still form an integral part of any assessment of performance.

No policy and no amount of knowledge will be of any use, however, unless services are continually and appropriately promoted. As well as straightforward promotions (putting the large print books by the counter, advertising on local radio, talking to voluntary groups) there is plenty of scope for working with social services and

other agencies serving target groups such as older people.

RNIB and others are actively campaigning for the Right to Read. We are working with publishers to exploit technology and develop new business models that will help alleviate the Book Famine, and we are continuing to urge the government to play its part by taking its hand out of its pocket! Libraries have a vital role to play in turning the right to read into a reality.

RNIB and the Right to Read Alliance conducted a survey of public library services for blind and partially sighted people at the end of 2006, as the new Disability Equality duty came into effect. We hope the findings will form the basis of a report to be published soon.