

Committee(s)	Dated:
Education Board – For Information Community and Children’s Services Committee – For Information Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee – For Information	12 January 2017 17 February 2017 6 February 2017
Subject: Barbican and Community Libraries services for children and families	Public
Report of: The Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
Report author: Carol Boswarthack – Culture, Heritage and Libraries	

Summary

Barbican and Community Libraries comprises the City’s three lending libraries; Barbican Library, Shoe Lane Library and Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. Our libraries all do far more than simply loan books. They also provide a range of innovative activities and services for children and families which positively impact education and literacy, socialisation/social isolation, health and wellbeing/child development and fun and play. Many of these services and activities are the product of successful partnership working and they also provide a variety of opportunities for the City’s communities to engage in volunteering. City parents consistently rate the services provided by the libraries very highly and consequently, the Department of Community and Children’s Services has commissioned Barbican and Community Libraries to deliver a range of Children’s Centre services on its behalf.

Recommendation(s)

- Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) comprises the head of service of every library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL has endorsed “The Children’s Promise” which sets out the experience children and young people should have through public library services i.e.:
 - Every child and young person visiting a public library is inspired by an exciting accessible environment which makes reading for pleasure irresistible.
 - They have the opportunity to engage with imaginative digital opportunities through public libraries, building their skills, knowledge and creativity.

- They will find a range of inclusive and diverse fiction and non-fiction books and other information resources to support growing confidence in literacy and formal and informal learning.
- They are able to take part in a wide range of literacy and cultural experiences including reading and book-based activities.
- They are actively involved in decisions about service developments and are offered opportunities to volunteer.
- They are supported through library services and activities to improve their health and wellbeing.

The full Children's Promise is attached at Appendix 1.

Current Position

2. The Mission Statement of Barbican and Community Libraries is:
 - To support and promote learning, reading and literacy, facilitate participation in community and cultural life and meet the needs of all our customers – current and potential.
 - Barbican Library houses a dedicated Children's Library and there are children's sections in the two smaller libraries. Services to children from all three libraries are coordinated by the Children's Services Librarian who is professionally qualified.
3. In addition to comprehensive fiction and non-fiction stock for children of all ages and all abilities, our libraries offer a range of innovative and successful services to support children and their families to enjoy, achieve and live healthy lives. Currently, there are 2892 Children's Library members.
4. Barbican and Community Libraries has recently been commissioned by The Department of Community and Children's Services to offer a range of Children's Centre services from all our libraries. These are listed at Appendix 2.
5. **Support for Education (including cultural education) and Literacy.**
Our libraries support children's formal and informal learning in the following ways:
 - Barbican Children's Library currently provides 25 teachers from local schools with project loans to support National Curriculum subjects. The Libraries also visit/receive scheduled visits from 12 school classes and 9 under 5s groups.
 - ***Read to Succeed***, our own literacy support programme for primary school aged children, operates from Barbican Library and partners children with a trained volunteer who will listen to the child read once a week. The volunteers are recruited from all sections of our local communities including City Workers. Currently, there are 17 children enrolled in the scheme and they are supported by 9 volunteers. Since its inception in 2012, 84 children and 44 volunteers have taken part.
 - All of our Libraries operate the national Summer Reading Challenge. This is run in partnership with (among others) Arts Council England and The Reading Agency. Children aged 4 – 11 years are encouraged to read six books throughout the school holidays. They are rewarded with small prizes along the way and completers are invited to a ceremony at the Great Hall where they receive a medal and certificate from a published author. In 2016, we recorded 5% more finishers than in 2015.

- A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) club operates from Barbican Children's Library during the summer holidays. It is run by a STEM Ambassador who is also a Barbican resident. This year, children enjoyed participating in a range of different experiments linked to the Summer Reading Challenge and learnt about a number of concepts such as exploring density, size and perspective whilst making lava lamps, rod puppets and creating rainbows.
- Barbican Children's Library runs a weekly, term-time Code Club in partnership with the national Code Club organisation <https://www.codeclub.org.uk/>. 2 volunteers from City firms teach children the coding languages Scratch and Python and this term they are experimenting with Micro:bits <http://microbit.org/> One young participant recently won a Google award for the design of a new app.
- Barbican Children's Library partnered with Sparks <http://www.sparks-ignite.com/courses>, an organisation which runs film and media courses for children and teenagers. Funded by a successful Lottery bid, 14 workshops have been run to date, each one attended by 15 children. 14 films based on books and reading were made by the children, 2 of which were animated films. Two of the courses were for 5 – 7 year olds, the rest were aimed at children aged between 8 – 10 years and 11 – 14 years. A grant application for further funding has recently been submitted.
- Barbican Children's Library provides a monthly creative writing workshop for 10 children aged 8 and above, run by a volunteer who is a published author and journalist.
- Every month, the Barbican Children's Library provides 4 one-hour book groups for children aged 7–9 years, 10-11 years, 12 – 13 years and 14 – 16 years of age.

6. Socialisation/tackling social isolation

The City can be a very lonely place for new parents, especially if their support networks are far away - in many cases, in other countries. Our libraries all offer a variety of fun, social activities for children aged under 5 and these activities also give parents and carers the opportunity to make friends, create support networks and socialise. Regular activities include:

- Barbican Children's Library and Artizan Street Library and Community Centre staff provide weekly Rhymetime sessions for under-fives and their parents/carers. They comprise 30 minutes of stories and songs. Attendance is particularly high at Barbican Library where it is not unusual to have more than 40 children attending (numbers are growing at Artizan Street) and staff responded by introducing a second weekly session.
- Stay and Play sessions comprising 1 hour (2 hours at Shoe Lane Library) of stories, songs and play with age-appropriate toys and crafts are provided at Artizan Street and Shoe Lane Libraries.
Baby Bounce, a similar session for children aged 2 and under, is also provided at Shoe Lane Library.
Artizan Street Library also provides a monthly 1.5 hour Stay and Play session specifically for nannies and au pairs

- Monthly 1 hour Messy Play sessions are provided at Shoe Lane Library. These sessions give young children the opportunity to play, be creative and get messy in the library. Activities usually include sand play, painting, and a range of different fun, sensory experiences (e.g. large trays of cornflakes, jelly, cold porridge) for children to explore.
- Weekly 30 minute Storytime sessions take place at Barbican and Shoe Lane Libraries.
- Once a month, Barbican Children's Library provides a Dads' Saturday morning Rhymetime session. This is particularly popular with fathers who do not live with their children but have weekend access to them and seek activities which are entertaining, low cost and safe.
- Shoe Lane parents (who are particularly isolated as residential accommodation in the locality is very fragmented), set up their own babysitting circle having met at the Library's Stay and Play sessions.

7. Health and Wellbeing/Child Development

Our libraries regularly provide events and services to support the health and wellbeing of children and families. These include/have included:

- Dental examinations in libraries in partnership with a City dental practice.
- Toddler Talk – sessions designed to improve speech development in 2 year olds.
- Paediatric first aid for parents sessions in libraries.
- Talks for parents in libraries, most recently on the new City Primary Academy.
- Staff from the Department of Community and Children's Services' Family and Young People's Information Service attending library Stay and Play/Rhymetime sessions to offer parents support and advice and/or early intervention.
- Treasure Baskets – a collection of sensory items to help babies learn and discover in all libraries.
- Comprehensive bookstock in all libraries, covering all aspects of child development and parenting skills.
- Signposting to other services, internal and external, by staff who are trained in answering enquiries.
- All library staff are trained in safeguarding and are regularly updated on how to report any concerns.

8. Fun and Play

Throughout the year, our libraries provide multiple opportunities for children of all ages to have fun and play via a programme of staff-led craft activities, professional storytellers and children's entertainers.

In addition to those activities mentioned under other headings, there is also:

- A monthly Secret Film Club at Barbican Children's Library.
- Every summer, one major event takes place when staff from all of our libraries come together to provide the "Summer Reading Challenge Conservatory Event" (in partnership with the Barbican Centre). This year, 150 children accompanied by 130 adults enjoyed crafts, face-painting, a treasure hunt and storytelling.

- The Monster Club at Barbican Library. This is a weekly, 1 hour social club providing board games and art and craft activities for children aged 5 – 11 years.

9. Volunteering opportunities

Our services and activities provide multiple opportunities for volunteering. The following examples are in addition to the opportunities mentioned previously

- Reading Hacks - opportunities for 14 – 18 year olds, funded by the Cabinet Office's social Action Fund. Since 2015, we have benefitted from the efforts of 47 Reading Hacks who have gained valuable life skills and grown in confidence by assisting with events and running their own activities with children.
- Duke of Edinburgh volunteers gain work experience in our libraries.
- Work experience opportunities for young people. We give preference to applicants from the City's Academies.
- Headstart, The Challenge <https://www.headstart-thechallenge.org/> provides local volunteering opportunities for young people along with a guaranteed job interview to participants who give up 16+ hours of their time over a period of three months. Currently, we are supporting 8 Headstart volunteers.

Proposals

10. Our libraries will continue to work closely with colleagues in the Family and Young People's Information Service along with other internal and external partners, explore new opportunities and seek out new partnerships to enhance the current offer to children and their families.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. Our work with Children and their families supports the City of London Corporation's strategic aims:

- To provide modern, efficient and high quality local services, including policing, within the Square Mile for workers, residents and visitors.
- To provide valued services, such as education, employment, culture and leisure, to London and the nation.

12. It also supports the Department of Culture, Heritage and Libraries' strategic aim 1: To transform activities through best use of technology and community engagement, to improve customer service and increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Implications

13. The work outlined in this report makes good use of spaces, staff, volunteers, partnerships, commissioning and grant funding opportunities and is therefore cost-effective. Appropriate licences are in place, there is a Volunteer Policy which is strictly followed, risk assessments are in place and volunteers are DBS checked so it is also low risk.

14. There are no property implications.

Conclusion

15. Barbican Library, Shoe Lane Library and Artizan Street Library and Community Centre provide a wide and varied range of services and activities for children and their families which go far beyond the basic library functions and which enhance their lives and their opportunities. These services are innovative, cost-effective and offer people from all our communities a range of volunteering opportunities.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – The Children’s Promise
- Appendix 2 - Services to Under 5s and families

Carol Boswarthack

Head of Barbican and Community Libraries
Department of Culture, Heritage and Libraries

T: 020 7332 1123

E: carol.boswarthack@cityoflondon.gov.uk