

Committee(s)	Dated:
Health and Wellbeing Board – For Information	02/02/2018
Subject: Barbican and Community Libraries support for health and wellbeing	Public
Report of: Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

This report brings together information about services provided by Barbican and Community Libraries (B&CL) which promote and support the health and wellbeing of customers of all ages including City residents, City workers, students and regular visitors to the City of London. Support and information are provided in a range of ways: our safe, welcoming, neutral community spaces; an expert enquiries service; a comprehensive range of resources (physical and digital) for reference and loan; and a wide range of library-based activities and events that promote good physical and mental health and a better sense of wellbeing.

We have worked closely with public health on the “Release the pressure” campaign. This is a pilot project testing out new ways of working with City workers to create a “mental wellbeing sanctuary” in the City, for which we have obtained a £15,000 grant from the Carnegie Enterprising Libraries Fund, one of only 14 successful applications from a field of 120. Following on from the creation of “Sanctuary Spaces” at Shoe Lane Library, loans of health and wellbeing related stock increased by 7%.

In our latest general customer user survey, 34% of respondents stated that the libraries had helped with their health and wellbeing.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In 2014, Arts Council England commissioned SImetrica to conduct a study on how public libraries make a positive impact on health and wellbeing. The resulting report, “The health and wellbeing benefits of public libraries” found that:

- Libraries play an important role in society as providers of a range of services from book lending and computer access to children's activities, training courses and meeting space.
 - Library engagement has a positive association with general health and being a regular library user is associated with a 1.4 per cent increase in the likelihood of reporting good general health.
 - Based on reductions in GP visits caused by this improvement in health, they predict the medical cost savings associated with library engagement at £1.32 per person per year and aggregate NHS cost savings across the library-using English population to estimate an average cost saving of £27.5 million per year.
 - These savings are confined exclusively to medical costs and there are likely to be other areas where the secondary benefits of local libraries may be felt, such as social care, education, skills training and employment. These figures therefore represent just a subset of the secondary benefits that local libraries provide.
2. Following extensive research and consultation, in 2016 the Department of Digital Culture, Media and Sport's Libraries Taskforce published its findings in the report "Libraries Deliver: Ambition for Public Libraries in England 2016 to 2021" This report found that libraries can deliver social change by focusing on seven outcomes:
- cultural and creative enrichment
 - increased reading and literacy
 - improved digital access and literacy
 - helping everyone achieve their full potential
 - healthier and happier lives
 - greater prosperity
 - stronger, more resilient communities

2.1. The following is taken from Outcome 5: Healthier and happier lives:

"Libraries increasingly focus on preventative work, helping people manage their own health to reduce both the burden on the NHS and health inequalities. By extending joint working and sharing resources with health providers, public libraries will become increasingly important partners, leading to users having healthier and happier lives.

Libraries offer a wide range of health information, both online and through quality-assured reading lists dealing with the more common health conditions. In their role as community hubs, libraries also offer non-clinical spaces in localities where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue. This helps support people in self-care and in self-management of long-term conditions (LTCs). People with LTCs spend less than 1% of their time in contact with healthcare professionals and rely on community support to help them for the rest of the time.

Libraries play an important role in boosting health literacy: a person's skills, knowledge and understanding about how to find and use information so they can act to support and improve their own health and wellbeing. Research shows that currently 43% of working age adults don't understand health

information given to them (up to 61% where this includes statistics). The NHS England Five Year Forward View stresses the need for people to manage their own health to help prevent illness; libraries help achieve this, closing health equality gaps through empowering more people in this way.

They're also places where people can come to meet others. Reducing social isolation is an important issue. In a 2013 study, 59% of adults aged over 52 who reported poor health said they felt lonely some of the time or often, compared to 21% of those who said they were in excellent health. Research suggests there are significant associations between frequent library use and reported wellbeing, and also between improved access to health information through libraries and reduced calls on services such as GPs."

3. In common with public libraries across the country the City's lending libraries have always played a role in supporting the health and wellbeing of their customers through:
 - the provision of reading matter in a variety of formats on subjects including general health, specific health issues and conditions, diet and nutrition, exercise and self-development;
 - "food for the soul" in terms of imaginative literature, poetry, memoir and music in addition to information to enhance and inform leisure pursuits and interests such as art and craft, sport and local and family history;
 - Provision of information about health and health services in the form of posters, leaflets and a full enquiries service including guidance in the use of online resources; and
 - Support in finding appropriate information and reading materials.Traditionally the role was a fairly passive one and wholly dependent on the customer knowing that a) libraries carry resources which would be of use to them and b) their having the courage to ask for help.

Current Position

4. Barbican and Community Libraries (B&CL) staff are now much more proactive in promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles and, working with partners, delivering key messages about coping with health challenges and living life to the full. This transition was under way before the transfer of public health responsibilities to local authorities but this change has provided fresh impetus and focus. Libraries are now key partners in the delivery of the City of London's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
5. Nationally the Society of Chief Librarians has responded to this refocussing of services by including health and wellbeing as one of its "universal offers" i.e. providing centralised guidance and support for health and wellbeing initiatives and, in partnership with the Reading Agency, making available a suite of resources put together by health professionals for use by libraries and health practitioners across the country.
6. In our survey of adult customers carried out in June this year, 34% of respondents said that Barbican and Community Libraries had helped with their health and wellbeing. In addition 88% of customers attending Barbican Library events between June and November 2017 said that the library has a positive effect on their health and wellbeing.
7. The City of London's Social Inclusion strategy, "Improving Social Wellbeing

in the City of London” includes the following statement:

Public libraries provide a shared space where people feel they belong and where people feel comfortable visiting on their own. This provides an accessible, safe and relaxed space where people can access help at their own pace. Our efforts to improve social wellbeing will therefore take a ‘libraries first’ approach.

8. Mental health

- 8.1. Although now embedded in the general social prescribing offer, the Books on Prescription concept goes back to pioneering work carried out by Professor Neil Frude in Wales at the turn of the century. Barbican and Community Libraries has been participating since the roll-out of the first nationally recognised Books on Prescription list in 2013 which addressed mild to moderate mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression and eating disorders. The titles were chosen by health professionals and support a self-help approach, often using the CBT model. The titles are freely available across the service and can be reserved free of charge if on loan. The list was promoted within the libraries, online and via the Neaman Practice and continues to be highlighted during health information weeks and at outreach events.
- 8.2. Our libraries stock a wide range of books, e-books, e-audio books, CDs and DVDs which support self-development and stress reduction including mood music and guided meditation. Staff can support customers in finding information online and completing self-help courses such as “The Mood Gym”. Several “mood boosting” lists have been drawn together into one and promoted, for instance, during mental health week. These cover fiction, poetry and memoir which readers have found to be uplifting whilst, for instance, living with cancer or depression.
- 8.3. For City workers, our libraries provide a place of refuge from the stress of the workplace. Last year Shoe Lane Library was remodelled to incorporate several “Sanctuary Spaces”, one of which also specifically showcases self-help wellbeing materials. Shoe Lane Library has seen a 7% increase in the use of health and wellbeing materials since the introduction of the new areas.
- 8.4. Knowing that many City workers are under considerable pressure, we make a point of highlighting our health offer when we visit firms to tell them about library services. We also offer regular lunchtime talks on coping strategies such as mindfulness, self-esteem and self-development, maintaining good relationships, and improving sleep patterns.
- 8.5. In 2018 Shoe Lane Library will be hosting the Dragon Café in the City. The Dragon Café is a collaboration between the City of London Corporation, Mental Fight Club, Shoe Lane Library and Output Arts. It aims to promote good mental wellbeing through a bi-weekly programme of activities including tai chi, chess, art workshops, talks and film screenings. This work is funded by a £15,000 grant from the Carnegie “Enterprising Libraries” fund. The City’s was one of only 14 successful applications from a field of 120.
- 8.6. The second of the Books on Prescription lists covers information for people living with and caring for those with dementia as well as for those who have not yet received a diagnosis. This list is heavily promoted during Dementia Awareness Week when our libraries also host information stalls and talks by representatives of the Alzheimer’s society. The list sits alongside our own list for carers, developed in partnership with the City’s Adult Social Care team,

and the separate Carers' Collection at Artizan Street Library. In addition to titles providing information and practical advice, this list includes life stories, providing a sense of shared experience and encouragement. Carers UK provide stalls and talks in our libraries during Carers Week and Carers Rights Week and there are regular "tea and cake" events at Artizan Street Library which give carers the chance to talk with others in similar situations.

9. Social Inclusion

- 9.1. Although reading is often viewed as a solitary occupation our libraries offer much to support social connection and consequent wellbeing
- 9.2. Barbican and Community Libraries provides a home delivery service to 30 people who would otherwise find it difficult to use the libraries. Providing books and other materials keeps open a window on the wider world and the regular collection and delivery service provides a valuable point of social interaction. Customers are therefore supported in remaining in their own homes, particularly as all Library staff have safeguarding training and can report any concerns they have for the wellbeing of their customers.
- 9.3. All library staff have also received training in dementia and autism awareness so as to be able deal sensitively with people living with these conditions.
- 9.4. Library staff are also trained to support customers in applying for 60+ Oyster cards and Freedom passes and organise 1-1 computer taster sessions to help digitally excluded customers get online and stay in touch with friends and family.
- 9.5. Libraries are open to all, free of charge and perceived as safe, neutral, community spaces. Our lending libraries, though generally peaceful, are not silent so customers can enjoy friendly interaction. All the libraries are accessible so that everyone can utilise the service.
- 9.6. Several groups meet on Library premises to share their interests, hone their skills and interact socially. This includes the Craft and Conversation circle and Speaking English with Confidence sessions at Barbican Library and the poetry reading circle and art class at Artizan Street Library. There are also free lunchtime talks on a variety of literary, cultural and historical themes and opportunities to attend free evening events at Barbican Library such as book and exhibition launches.
- 9.7. In addition to providing free access to two practice pianos, Barbican Library organises the annual "People's Piano" project, bringing together residents with a range of skills including complete beginners, and Guildhall School of Music & Drama students who provide 10 lessons as part of the teaching requirement of their degrees.
- 9.8. Reading groups and book clubs provide a focus for conversation and a widening of horizons. Every month, 12 book clubs for all ages take place in our libraries with an average attendance of 8 people per session. B&CL also support community and workplace book clubs by providing suggestions and materials.
- 9.9. Read and Relax, a therapeutic reading group led by the library service, takes place once a month at Golden Lane Leisure Centre. Following the model pioneered by Jane Davis of Liverpool University, participants read a story and poem together and use this as a springboard for discussion and reminiscence rather than literary criticism. The group is open to all but since its inception in 2013, several of the members who have come and gone have been dealing

with memory problems or dementia. Currently around half a dozen people meet each month out of a core group of 10. When surveyed all of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “(By attending the group) I have enjoyed opportunities to connect with people I wouldn’t normally meet”.

10. Physical Health

- 10.1. Libraries stock a wide range of books, DVDs and online resources to help customers understand and manage health conditions such as high blood pressure, irritable bowel syndrome, arthritis and cancer. Arthritis Care have provided information stalls giving advice and guidance in how to live well with both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. The latest Books on Prescription list is centred on long-term conditions such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease.
- 10.2. In addition to medical resources, wider wellbeing issues are addressed such as diet and nutrition, exercise and weight loss in addition to other healthy activities such as sport, yoga and pilates and gardening. This stock is highlighted from time to time with special promotional displays, for instance in National Walking month we put the spotlight on our maps and walking guides, walk for health books and walking memoirs plus information about local activities such as Walk for Health, London guided walks and Young at Heart. Our annual City Read reader development festival (taking place in May 2018) includes local walks which echo themes and places from the featured book and the Friends of Barbican Library lead a fundraising walk each Autumn.
- 10.3. Artizan Street Library is the focus for many of our health related activities which take place in its specially equipped community spaces. These include a range of fun exercise classes, smoking cessation courses and health MOTs. All the libraries promote Stoptober with events, stalls and talks highlighting smoking cessation support in the City. In addition all three libraries participate in the “Come Correct Scheme” providing free condoms for 16-24 year olds.

11. Employability

- 11.1. It is recognised that meaningful work is often central to self-esteem and self-realisation and financial security can make a healthy lifestyle more achievable. Barbican and Community Libraries support jobseekers by providing a range of resources, hosting CV workshops and helping people get online and complete job applications. We have resources to underpin formal and informal education and training and continuing professional development. Of particular help to students is our provision of access to research papers (via the Access to Research resource) and academic periodicals via JSTOR. Our specialist music resources such as Naxos and the International Index to Music Periodicals provide information for academic, vocational and leisure musical research.
- 11.2. Our Skills for Life Sections include substantial collections of material for supporting both teachers and learners of English as a foreign or second language and also resources to help adults develop their literacy, numeracy and other life skills.

- 11.3. Libraries offer many opportunities for individuals to gain work skills via volunteering and work experience. Volunteers are actively recruited and trained to deliver our most important youth literacy projects: Read to Succeed and the Summer Reading challenge. Young people following the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme complete their community volunteering element by shelf-tidying for an hour a week. Friends of the Barbican Library help out with events, outreach and customer consultation. School students and library school students complete one or two week placements each year. We have also been fortunate in being able to take on two apprentices in the last year.

12. Children and Young People

- 12.1. B&CL staff are committed to giving children the best start in life and this extends well beyond literacy skills. The service includes stock for parents and carers covering such topics as child development and parenting skills. In addition, staff from the Children and Families Information Service regularly attend Under 5s events in order to meet parents and offer advice and support. Regular events such as Stay and Play, Rhymetimes and Dads' Rhymetimes give parents and carers a chance to meet, chat and build social networks for adults and children alike. Parents living in the vicinity of Shoe Lane report social isolation but have used the twice weekly Stay and Play sessions at the library to make connections and have created their own babysitting circle.
- 12.2. Parents have been given the opportunity to learn first aid for children in our libraries and to take part in Toddler Talk which aims to improve speech amongst 2 year olds. Libraries also offer access to Treasure Baskets which are full of sensory items to help children learn. Children have been given dental examinations in the libraries due to a partnership with one of the City's dental practices.
- 12.3. "Shelf Help", the Books on Prescription list for Children and Young People is mainly aimed at under 14s and covers such topics as depression, self-esteem and eating disorders. The list has been disseminated via displays in both adult and children's libraries and has also been a topic for discussion at the reading group for the oldest child age group at the Barbican Library.
- 12.4. As previously mentioned, Children's Services also provide ample scope for volunteering and those involved have a very clear idea of the difference they can make to a young child's prospects in life.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Our work is directly related to the following strategies and objectives:

The City and Hackney's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

1. Good mental health for all
4. All children have the best start in life
5. Promoting healthy behaviours

DCCS Objectives:

2. Potential - People of all ages can achieve their ambitions through education, training and life-long learning

3. Independence, involvement and choice - People can live independently and exercise choice over their services
4. Health and Wellbeing - People of all ages enjoy good health and wellbeing
5. Community - People of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their communities

B&CL top line objective:

4. People of all ages enjoy good health and wellbeing

Implications

There are no financial, legal, property or HR implications to consider.

Conclusion

Barbican and Community Libraries makes a significant contribution to the realisation of local and national goals as regards the physical and mental health of people in the City of London. The “Libraries First” policy has resulted in many powerful partnerships and collaborations, the latest of which is Shoe Lane Library hosting the Dragon Café in the City project.

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