

Committees: Culture, Heritage and Libraries – For Information Community and Children’s Services – For Information	Dated: 20/01/2020 07/02/2020
Subject: Barbican and Community Libraries, services for children and families	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children’s Services	For Information
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Summary

This report updates members on the range of innovative activities and services for children and families provided by Barbican and Community Libraries. These initiatives positively impact on 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 as a result of this, and in partnership with the City’s Family and Young People’s team, Barbican and Community Libraries continues to deliver a range of Children’s Centre services for the City.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Libraries Connected is a charity that was previously known as the Society of Chief Librarians (SCL). It comprises the head of service of every library authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Libraries Connected has endorsed ‘The Children’s Promise’, which sets out the experience that children and young people should have through public library services:
 - 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.

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

Current Position

3. The Barbican Children's Library is a dedicated space within the Barbican Library and there are children's sections in the two smaller libraries. Services to children from all three libraries are co-ordinated by the Children's Services Librarian who is professionally qualified. 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.
4. 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. We currently have 2,481 registered members who are children.
5. Barbican and Community Libraries delivers a range of Children's Centre services from all our libraries, including Rhyme Time, Messy Play and Stay and Play.
6. There are only two members of dedicated children's library staff, both based at Barbican Library. These are the Children's Services Librarian and the Principle Library Assistant. The other two libraries have generalist staff who curate a diverse programme of children's activities and events under the supervision of the Children's Services Librarian.
7. In 2018, at the Barbican Library, a comprehensive training programme was put in place to upskill all the library assistants who work in the Children's Library. This programme gives staff the skills and confidence they need to run events such as Rhyme Time. The benefits are that members of staff increase their skills base and it provides flexibility as the volume of work that takes place in the children's library is not sustainable for two people alone.
8. One of our greatest achievements was to train a Senior Library Assistant, who has worked at Barbican Library for 40 years but never in the children's library. He now takes part in Rhyme Time sessions and reads to nursery children, and they thoroughly enjoy his performance. He enjoys using his new skills, and there has

been a very positive impact on those staff who were initially resistant and apprehensive about leading activities.

9. Children's Library activity is regularly evaluated via questionnaires to measure success against our core aims.

In 2018–19,

- 89% of parents and carers agreed that our services and activities gave their children the opportunity to make friends
- 93% agreed that our services and activities gave them (the adults) the opportunity to make friends
- 96% agreed that the library's services and activities have a positive impact on their family's health and wellbeing
- 96% agreed that the library's services and activities help with their child's development (co-ordination and motor skills, speech and language).

10. Socialisation/tackling social isolation

All three libraries provide activities for under-5s and their parent/carers, including the Children's Centre services. The aim of our programme is to have fun while tackling social isolation. Many of our customers live far away from their families and support networks, some of which are abroad. These activities provide parents/carers with the opportunity to create new support networks, make new friends and for their children to have fun and socialise with children of differing ages and backgrounds. Our regular activities for under-5s are:

- **Rhyme Time:** Barbican Children's Library and Artizan Street Library offer four Rhyme Time sessions per week for children aged under-3, and their families/carers. Rhyme Times are participative 30-minute sessions of songs and stories. Children's Library staff have received some basic training in Makaton, a language programme designed to provide a means of communication to individuals who cannot communicate efficiently by speaking. One of the weekly Barbican Children's Library sessions now includes Makaton signing.

Saturday Rhyme Time was originally devised as a 'Dads' Rhyme Time' and specifically aimed at fathers living apart from their children. Following requests from working mothers, this popular session is now aimed at all parents who work during the week. Barbican Children's Library has a reciprocal arrangement with Islington Library Service in which our staff guest at their Rhyme Times and their staff come to the Barbican Rhyme Time; this has proved useful in disseminating information about our services to a wider audience, and has resulted in new customers joining the library, increasing numbers at our events. The Barbican Children's Library has an informal Stay and Play after each Rhyme Time session, which usually lasts 45 minutes and during which parents and carers can socialise while their children play together with library toys.

- **Story Time:** Barbican Children's Library holds a weekly 30-minute story time for children aged 3 and upwards.

- **Stay and Play:** Shoe Lane Library holds a weekly Stay and Play with Rhyme Time included. This is a two-hour session and their Story Time has been adapted to be a part of this session. Age-appropriate toys are provided, and a different craft activity is provided each week. Artizan Street library also holds a Stay and Play, (which follows on from their Rhyme Time), in which they use musical instruments and multi-sensory props.
- **Baby Bounce:** These weekly sessions are similar to Rhyme Time but are specifically for babies under 18 months. They are held at Shoe Lane and Artizan Street libraries.
- **Messy Play:** Monthly one-hour Messy Play sessions are provided at Shoe Lane and Artizan Street Libraries and are extremely popular. 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 sensory experiences (for example, large trays of cornflakes, jelly, cold porridge) for children to explore.

11. Education and Literacy

- **Read to Succeed:** Barbican Children's Library and Artizan Street Library offer our own City of London scheme, which supports primary school children to become more fluent in reading. Each child is partnered with a volunteer and they read together for half an hour a week. Volunteers are DBS checked and come from all sections of the community, including City residents and City workers. We currently have 21 children and 12 volunteers taking part in the scheme. In total, we have worked with 101 children and 51 volunteers since the scheme started in 2012. Parents regularly credit the scheme with changing reluctant readers into keen readers.
- **Code Club:** We run weekly, term-time code clubs at Barbican Children's Library and Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. Each cohort participates in the club for one academic year. This activity is run in partnership with the national Code Club organisation <https://www.codeclub.org.uk/>. Currently, we have six volunteers from Lloyds Banking Group who run both clubs for us. Initially, children are taught to code using the programming language, Scratch, and they progress onto Python and HTML throughout the year. Since September 2018, 35 children have taken part in the club. Graduates of the club have reported being ahead of classmates when coding lessons start at secondary school.
- Every year our lending libraries take part in the national Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), which is run in partnership with Arts Council England and The Reading Agency. Children aged 4 to 11 are encouraged to read any six books of their choice borrowed from their library during the summer holidays. Children receive special rewards for each book finished. When they have completed the SRC, they are invited to a ceremony at the Great Hall where they receive a medal and certificate from a published author. This year, 187

children completed the SRC and received their certificate and medals from the performance poet and author, Neal Zetter.

- Every month, the Barbican Children's Library provides five one-hour book groups for children aged 7–9, 10–11 and 12–13 years. A home-schooled book group meets once a month in the Barbican Children's Library and another meets at Shoe Lane Library.
- A STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art 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 SRC, and learned about concepts such as thrust, gravity and robotics. Working with the STEM Learning organisation, we borrowed Lego Mindstorm kits which were used to build space buggies. There are children who come back every year to take part in the STEAM club.
- **Project loans:** Barbican Children's Library currently provides long-term book loans, based on National Curriculum subjects, to 24 teachers from 12 local schools and nurseries to support their classes.
- Barbican Children's Library has an annual programme of library visits from local schools and nurseries. Visits are currently received from 12 primary school classes and nine under-5s groups.
- In the past 12 months we have hosted four Able Writers Days at the Barbican Children's Library in partnership with Authors Abroad. These workshops are facilitated by Neal Zetter. The aim of the workshops is to develop young writers' self-expression, creativity and literacy skills through writing and performing poetry in a fun and supportive environment. These workshops attract classes from local schools and schools across London.
- The Children's Services Librarian is working with the Quality Improvement Consultant working with the Early Years Team on the City of London Talks and Listens Enthusiastically (COLTALE) project.
COLTALE is a two-year Communication and Language project that focuses on three main themes, all of which have a considerable impact on child development:
 1. Environment. Is it communication-friendly?
 2. Practitioners. How well do they understand child development in this area?
 3. Parents. Do they know how to support their children?

The project is expected to provide impact in the following areas:

- Children with any form of language delay are identified and supported early.
- Narrowing of the attainment gap.
- Parents better understand how to support their young children.
- Early years practitioners have increased confidence in how to support young children.

- Environments for children are communication-friendly and encourage the use of language.

The mascot of the COLTALE project is a blue dragon. Three toy dragons have been delivered to our libraries to inspire children to start creating stories about them. These stories will be made into a book with illustrations provided by older child customers.

- All of the libraries support and promote The Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Part of the City's supporting early literacy offer, this project provides free monthly books to City families with children aged under 5 years.

12. Health and Wellbeing/Child Development

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

- Workshops run in partnership with HENRY (Health, Exercise, Nutrition for the Really Young). The Best Start with HENRY service supports families in the City with children aged 0–5 years with family programmes and a wide range of workshops – from Fussy Eaters to Let's Get Active. Staff from HENRY have run workshops at all three libraries.
- Dental health talks take place in Barbican and Shoe Lane libraries twice a year, in partnership with a City dental practice.
- Eye clinic visits from City Sight take place twice a year at the Barbican Library.
- Staff from the Family and Young People's Information Service attend library Stay and play/Rhyme Time sessions to offer parents support and advice. This is an important part of their early intervention and prevention work.
- Treasure Basket – all of our libraries have a collection of sensory items that help babies learn and discover.
- Comprehensive book stock 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. The Children's Services Librarian is the safeguarding lead for Barbican and Community Libraries and is responsible for ensuring that library staff are supported in reporting concerns and updating their knowledge. She is also responsible for updating the section's safeguarding policy.

13. 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.

Activities in addition to those mentioned elsewhere include:

- A monthly Secret Film Club at Barbican Children's Library
- An annual major summer event where staff from all our libraries come together to provide the Summer Reading Challenge Fun Day, held in the Barbican Conservatory. In 2019, 205 children accompanied by 192 adults enjoyed crafts, face-painting, a treasure hunt and storytelling. This event is run in partnership with many City organisations and this year included Tower Bridge, Barbican Centre, Salter's Company, the Museum of London and Culture Mile.
- Monster Club at Barbican Children's Library – a weekly, hour-long social club with a variable format including board games, puzzles and art and craft activities for children aged 5–14 years.
- Kid's Club at Barbican Children's Library – a monthly club run by children for children. Staff act purely as facilitators. Activities have included badge making and storytelling.
- Philosophy Club at Barbican Children's Library – a monthly club run by staff where children are introduced to philosophical ideas such as identity, and happiness. They discuss these concepts at a level suitable for children, encouraging discussion and critical thinking.
- Saturday Art club – a weekly club that encourages children to go beyond simply colouring in, for example, offering a still life tableau to draw.
- In addition to these regular activities, all three libraries regularly host events provided by external entertainers. In the past three years these have included magicians, animal encounters, storytellers and authors. In February 2019, students from Guildhall School of Music and Drama performed 'What the Storm Brought', a play with puppets, at Barbican Children's Library and Shoe Lane Library. The students wrote the play and the music, designed all of the sets and made the puppets and props. The play formed part of their coursework, and their performances were assessed by their tutor. It was of great benefit to the students to be able to perform their exam piece to their target audience of children, and the libraries were very pleased to host an original piece of work created by talented students. More than 80 children and their parents watched the play, offering them the opportunity to be exposed to, and take part in, contemporary theatre.

14. Volunteers

Our libraries offer many opportunities for people of all ages to volunteer and contribute to the local community. Some examples of our volunteering opportunities for young people of 14 years and older include:

- SRC volunteers help staff to run the challenge in Barbican and Artizan Street Libraries. Since 2017, 33 volunteers have been recruited and trained and they are vital in administering the Challenge. Many of our volunteers are City residents. Three of these volunteers are young people who have volunteered every year since 2017.
- HeadStart – <https://www.headstart-thechallenge.org/> – HeadStart aims to inspire a new generation of volunteers and provide a significant benefit to society by connecting young people to local volunteering opportunities. HeadStart also provides a guaranteed job interview to those who give 16+ hours of their time. In the past three years, Barbican and Community Libraries has supported more than 20 young people via this programme.
- Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) awards volunteers gain valuable work experience by regularly working in our libraries. Currently 11 DoE volunteers are working at Barbican Library in both the adult and children's libraries, each volunteering for one hour per week.
- All three lending libraries provide work experience opportunities for young people. Pupils from City-based schools and City academies are prioritised for these sought-after opportunities.

Proposals

15. 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.
16. Staff from Barbican and Community Libraries are currently scoping the creation of a Makerspace at Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. A Makerspace is a collaborative workspace for making, learning, exploring and sharing that uses a variety of tools – high tech to no tech. These spaces are typically open to children, adults, and entrepreneurs and provide a variety of equipment including 3D printers. This space would be available for use by the local community with activities run for children and adults, as well as by the local business community.
17. The Children's Services Librarian is currently discussing the possibility of providing British Sign Language (BSL) Rhyme Times with BSL-trained Islington Libraries colleagues. The Children's Services Librarian is trained in basic Makaton, a language programme designed to provide a means of communication to individuals who cannot communicate efficiently by speaking. More Barbican and Community Libraries staff will attend future courses with the aim of extending the Makaton Rhyme Time to all three libraries.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

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

- People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

Implications

19. The work that is being carried out in our libraries 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 strictly followed Volunteer Policy, risk assessments are in place, and volunteers are DBS checked, so projects are also low risk.

Conclusion

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

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) Children's Promise
- Appendix 2 – Regular events programme
- Appendix 3 – Case Study

Background Papers

- **Previous reports to** Education Board, Community and Children's Services Committee and Culture, Heritage and Libraries Committee January/February 2017

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