



WELCOME TO YOUR LIBRARY PROGRESS REPORT November 2007

Introduction

Southwark Libraries are a partner in Welcome To Your Library, which is a national project, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and co-ordinated through the London Libraries Development Agency, that aims to connect public libraries with refugees and asylum seekers (RAS). By increasing opportunities for participation, Welcome To Your Library aims to improve access to and quality of public library services for everyone.

Southwark Libraries aims to connect public libraries and refugee and asylum seeker communities to nurture learning, well being and a sense of belonging for all. This will be achieved through:

- **Participation** of refugee communities throughout the work
- **Partnerships** to raise awareness and increase public library use
- **Training** of Library staff so that they are confident and best equipped to engage with the community.
- **Sharing of good practice** based on a robust portfolio of evidence.
- **Advocacy** for public library work with refugees and asylum seekers

Restructuring in Southwark Libraries

The restructuring process that commenced in August 2006 was completed, with the majority of new posts filled and the new Area Structure operational on 1st April 2007. Up to sixty staff were involved in this process and as a result there has been a rapid period of change and adjustment, with existing and newly recruited staff moving into new roles and responsibilities.

The recruitment of both a Skills for Life Manager, and a Reader Development Manager has greatly helped in facilitating the WTYL program, and the involvement of the Operations Manager and the Area Librarians has helped to ensure that the WTYL initiatives are becoming mainstream.

Even though the restructuring process was finalised in April 2007, the impact on the WTYL program is still continuing with the new professional staff still adjusting to their new roles. There is still a high level of vacancies, the most relevant being the recruitment for the two Community Engagement Officers in the Community Library Service, the service that I personally line manager. The role of the Community Engagement Officers will be to continue with the project work, and many of the initiatives of the WTYL program. It is planned

that the key area of their work will be to facilitate the community engagement program throughout all of the libraries in Southwark. This will involve initiatives with many of the new communities of Southwark, of which a major part will be with both the established and new RAS community in Southwark.

ACTION PLAN

Summary of progress.

Key Objective 1:

Barriers to use of libraries by refugees and asylum seekers(RAS) eliminated

1.1 Review policies and procedures

- The Welcome to your Library project has now become an integral part of the priority program of Southwark Libraries, being discussed at both Library Management and Library Operational meetings. At the monthly operational meeting there is the opportunity to regularly brief the managers of the new Area structure of key developments within the WTYL project, for further communication at the staff meetings at individual libraries.
- The removal of the need for proof of address, when promoting the library service at outreach events such as: the Citizenship ceremonies and attendance at the RAS day centres.
- The success of the Citizenship Ceremonies, and the engagement and subsequent joining of the new citizens to Southwark Libraries, has resulted in its initiative becoming mainstreamed into both policy and procedures for Southwark libraries. It has now been included as an essential training mechanism for both community engagement and raising awareness of the new citizens living within Southwark. The procedure is now in place for all staff to attend the ceremony as a training exercise.
- The formation of Community Library Services as an integral part of the restructuring process. The role of this service is to lead on the engagement with socially excluded groups and new communities within Southwark. Within this client group RAS represents a large customer base, with both well-established residents in Southwark and new communities in Southwark.
- The restructuring program has been modified to include the appointment of two new Community Engagement Officers, for the Community Library Service. It is a strong indication that the inclusion of these new posts within the restructuring process, emphasise the commitment of Southwark Libraries towards the community engagement process. A major part of this community engagement

process will involve engagement with the RAS communities of Southwark; including formalising and mainstreaming the Citizenship Ceremonies into Southwark Libraries business plan.

- A major element of the restructuring process, was the priority for all Library Managers and senior staff, to be involved with community engagement process, and in particular the engagement with the new communities of Southwark, of which the RAS represents a large proportion of these new communities.

1.2 Form advisory panel of refugees and asylum seekers

- The purchase and launch of the Somali library collection, and further developing initiatives, have been achieved with the consultation of the Southwark Somali Advisory Forum. The successful launch of the collection during Refugee Week was achieved in partnership with the Forum, who provided the necessary links with the Somali Community to ensure that the event was well attended by clients from the community. Further initiatives with the Forum have led to ESOL classes in libraries funded by the MLA's, Skills for Life innovation fund and future involvement planned for 2008 include a Somali Book Fair, in conjunction with Scanscope, and a Somali Cultural day in September 2008, to celebrate the Year of Reading.
- Prior to the purchase of the Latin American Spanish library collection, consultation with CIDU (Community Involvement Development Unit), SAVO (Southwark Action for Volunteer Organisations), LAWRS (Latin American Women's Rights Service) and local Latin American Spanish community organisations led to the formation of an advisory panel consisting of three members for the Latin American Spanish community. These panel members with the help of managers from Southwark Libraries were responsible for the purchase of the library collection from Grant and Cutler. This collection plus donations received from the community and from LAWRS, will be launched in January 2008, with an event similar to the launch of the Somali collection.

Key Objective 2:

Increasing awareness of the library service amongst the refugee and asylum seeking population through outreach work, partnerships with local RCO's and publicity.

- Continuation of the established partnership between Southwark libraries and SRCF, there has been regular attendance at the forums monthly meetings, which has included presentations at these meetings of library provisions to this client group. There has been strong involvement with planning of events for Refugee Week led by the SRCF, by becoming a panel member for the organising committee. The planning meetings were held every two weeks and attended by many RCO's, and led to partnership working with myself and representatives from: Sierra Leone, Latin American Spanish, Albanian, Vietnamese, Ghanaian and Iranian community. This partnership took the form of the production of their displays, in

return for the displays being placed in libraries during the coming year, and the representatives offering to be advisors between their community groups and libraries.

- Regular meetings between myself, the Reader Development Manager and SAVO, which led to the consultation process with the Latin American Spanish community.
- Consultation with CIDU, Southwark Council's community involvement section, on programs with both the Somali and the Latin American Spanish communities. CIDU are currently in the process of establishing a Latin American Spanish consultation group with a remit of direct access with the Council's departments. This community has invited Southwark Libraries as a key section for access.
- There has been a program of regular attendance at the three day centers for RAS, throughout the year. At the Crossway center numerous clients have joined Southwark Libraries, but sadly there is no evidence, of members using the libraries despite regular contact and promotion. There have been meetings between myself and both the activities coordinator and the representative responsible for mental health issues, to try to establish a program for integrating their clients into mainstream library provision. This has included a program of walking clients both to the library, to receive a walk through introduction to the library services. On the days when this has been arranged, sadly the clients become too involved with the provision of food, advice and contact that they receive at the centers, to proceed with this project. There are plans to try to establish a morning session, prior to the day centers opening at 1.00pm.

During the visits to the Copleston and Peckham settlement day centers, which are located close to Peckham Library, there has been promotion to both the center workers and the clients, of the ESOL provision and the citizenship classes run by Adult Learning in Peckham Library. These classes are organised independently for Peckham Library, by Adult Learning a section under the same department as libraries.

- Visited the Southwark Refugee Project based approximately 200 meters from Peckham Library. They recently have had their funding cut for ESOL provision, and are keen to investigate the ESOL provision for their clients at Peckham library.
- The vision for Community Library Services as part of the restructuring program has resulted in the mobile library visiting the most remote schools and estates in Southwark. This initiative has involved engagement with many of the new communities who previously were not members of Southwark Libraries. The initiative involved links with the children in their schools and subsequently an engagement program with the parents outside the schools. Included in these new communities are many from a refugee background, from predominantly Latin American, African including Somali and Sierra Leone, Middle East including Iraq and Iran and from Eastern Europe.

- Partnership established with Southwark Council's Homeless section as a result of lunch with the Leader of the Council, following the "Star Awards". The Project Manager for the Homeless Section, who was also present, expressed an interest in establishing a partnership with libraries, with the intention of removing any barriers for their clients, to provide full access to libraries. Similar to the initiatives with clients in mental health provision, provision in this area and the work with refugees and asylum seekers overlap considerable. This initiative and partnership with the Homeless Section will ensure that work with this client group will continue after the WTYL program has formally ended.
- Development in the area relating to mental health issues. Continue to supply library materials to both Maudsley and Guy's hospital, where there is a strong element of clients from a refugee background. Developed links in this provision with both the day centers for RAS and through an organisation called Gharweg (Ghana Welfare Refugee group). Gharweg received funding from Neighbourhood Renewal for a project to engage with refugee families, where there is occurrence of mental health issues. Gharweg invited Southwark Libraries to speak at the launch event, as they view libraries as a safe haven for clients from this background

2.2 Display booth at Southwark refugee and asylum seekers week

- Regular attendance at the refugee week planning meeting, at the request of the coordinator of the SRCF. The meetings were hosted by the SRCF, with many of the RCOs and service providers attending.
- Attendance with stall and display at the main launch event for refugee week at Lucas Gardens. The stall promoted an array of library material for this client group. Including books, music CDs and DVDs, and a large collection of dual language picture books covering the most relevant languages. Clients were encouraged to join without proof of address and borrow the material on the day. Twenty-eight new members were joined, and the dual language books prove to be extremely popular, with many items being borrowed.

2.3 Host RCO and other related meetings in libraries

- Established a fortnightly Somali Mother and Toddler group at John Harvard Library, the numbers of the group have increased to ten mothers and fifteen children. The group only meet in school time, and it is planned to move the group to Newington Library in 2008, the location of the Somali collection.
- A partnership has been established with LAWRS for a project called "Building Brighter Futures". The project aims to provide advice sessions in libraries, for Latin American parents, on the mainstream education system for their children in the United Kingdom. The advice sessions started in November at East Street Library, the library identified for the Latin American Spanish library collection, due to be launched in January 2008. To facilitate the project contact

has been established with the key organisations in the area, including a Latin American Spanish Saturday school, (approximately 300 meters from the library), SAVO and the well-established links with the Bermondsey International Parents Group. At this present time it is too early to evaluate the projects success, after only two sessions, but with an event planned to launch the library collection, the intention is to establish this library as the center for the Latin American Spanish community

- Following the successful bid to the MLA's, Skills for Life Innovations Fund, there has been a program of ESOL classes for the Somali community held in two of Southwark Libraries. Combined with the classes have been "walkthrough sessions" to introduce these clients to the range of services offered by Southwark Libraries. Following requests from the group, combined with input from Scanscope, there are plans to establish a Somali Book Group in 2008. The group would meet at Newington Library, and use the Somali collection as the focal point for the meetings

2.4 Publicise project work in local press

- The WTYL project received recognition by a successful award at the "star" awards for Southwark staff held at Shakespeare's Globe in Southwark.
- The event to launch the Somali library collection was publicised in both the refugee website and Somali Eye.
- The WTYL project in Southwark Life, a monthly publication that is distributed to all residences in Southwark.

2.5 Translate library information

- As yet not achieved, current Welcome to your library pack contains information in different languages.
- Current pack is in the process of being reproduced, where emphasis on different language provision will be incorporated. The delay has been caused by the recent restructure.
- To launch the Somali Language collection, the publicity for the event was produced in both English and Somali. The distribution of this publicity and the successful attendance at the event showed the effectiveness of producing the information in Somali.

Key Objective 3:

Relevant materials, resources and activities available to meet needs as defined by refugee and asylum seekers.

3.1 ICT Tasters

- Continued with the ICT taster sessions for Asylum seekers. The sessions were promoted through the three days centers for RAS. The sessions were well attended, but the continued use of the ICT facilities by the clients could not be assessed, as there is no mechanism in place to monitor individual usage of the ICT facilities.
- "Walkthrough sessions" for ESOL classes at both Newington and Rotherhithe library, following a pilot during Adult Learner's Week.

The sessions are intended as an introductory to the services that libraries can offer, and the clients are encouraged to join at these sessions. As yet the sessions have only been promoted to two organisations; Gharweg and BEC, but the intention is to mainstream this initiative to the numerous ESOL organisations in Southwark.

3.2 Organise learning opportunities in libraries

- The Somali ESOL classes, organised in conjunction with Adult Learning, has already covered in this report.
- Both ESOL and Citizenship classes organised by Adult Learning section, are held regularly in the Peckham Library building. The Adult Learning is part of Culture, Libraries and Learning, and future partnerships, are in the process of being planned by the Skills For Life Manager.
- Online ICT based Citizenship test practice sessions, piloted as part of Adult learner's week. The successful pilot is to be extended during 2008, under the direction of the Skills For Life Manager, who was newly appointed during the restructuring process.
- Originally the intention to purchase specialised software from 22 Soft, relating to online Citizenship tests, was delayed due to its incompatibility with Southwark Libraries IT system. Recent developments have led to 22 Soft producing a web based system, that would be compatible with our IT network, that can be purchased and has no future revenue costs. It is intended to purchase the packages before April 2008. The languages used in these packages have a strong presence in Southwark

3.3 Resource list for RAS

- As yet not achieved

3.4 Special events

- Launch of the Somali library collection, with an event in Refugee week. The event was organised in conjunction with the Southwark Somali Advisory Forum who provided both the entertainment and the selection of Somali food. The event was publicised on the main refugee week website and was attended by over sixty people, the majority from the Somali community. Over twenty new members joined to Southwark Libraries, and nearly one hundred items borrowed from the Somali collection.
- Event organised by the Southwark Refugee Artist Network, as part of refugee week. The event called "Through the flowers of my Soul" held at Peckham Library included live music and poetry from Iran, Chile, El Salvador and Columbia. The event proved to be successful with approximately twenty people attending the event.
- Storytelling sessions and displays in all libraries as part of Refugee Week. The highlight of the sessions was to incorporate the Local Councillor, with responsibility for libraries, to tell stories in Spanish to a Latin American Spanish audience at John Harvard Library

3.5 Stock- Purchase stock with at least 3 groups of RAS involved

- Somali collection purchased under the guidance of the Somali Advisory Forum.
- Latin American Spanish collection purchased under the guidance of a Latin American Spanish advisory panel.
- Previously well established collections are in the process of being revised, the first is the Vietnamese collection at Peckham library. In conjunction with the local Vietnamese community organisation, material from Bright Books will be organised on a rotation plan.
- Priority for 2008 will be to maintain and extend these collections, and following statistic information, purchase material in Arabic, Farsi and Kurdish to be based at Peckham Library.

Key Objective 4:

Confident library staff aware of and committed to meeting the needs of refugee and asylum seekers.

1.1 Assess staff awareness and attitude

- Considered to be an unrealistic target within the current timeframe.

1.2 Create a training program for staff

- The original training plan produced in partnership with the SRCF which was strongly endorsed by the coordinator for the WTYL project, sadly was cancelled at late notice after repeated delays from the SRCF.
- A new revised program was produced in September/ October in collaboration with Refugee Education (see appendix 1). The program incorporates both the training element for managers and an element for all library assistants. The program once again has received endorsement from the coordinator for the WTYL project, and will receive evaluation in 2008.

1.3 Create a “mystery shopping” program.

- Considered to be a unrealistic target within the current timeframe

1.4 Create component of staff induction

- A priority for the year 2008 is to establish a program for dissemination of the WTYL project at the one-hour training sessions at all libraries.
- Progress is under way to produce a power-point presentation to be placed on the libraries shared drive for dissemination of the WTYL project to all staff, and to be used as a module for staff induction days.

4.5 Compile data on RAS communities in Southwark

- Achieved as indicated in the March report. The continuous statistical information from the Citizenship Ceremonies (appendix 2), emphasises the correct direction for the libraries initiatives.

- A predominant element of the training program with Refugee Education, for all staff, is the statistical data relevant to Southwark

Conclusion

The major restructuring of Southwark Libraries and the change in lead officer has had an impact upon the progress of the WTYL project in Southwark, but despite these drastic changes the initiatives in the key priority areas have continued to progress, to indicate the distance travelled by Southwark Libraries in the WTYL project. There is a good portfolio of evidence with which to demonstrate how Southwark Libraries have taken the project forward with a commitment to establishing it as a sustainable and core element of service development and delivery.

Priorities for the project for 2008:

1. Proceed with the excellent links with the Somali Advisory Forum, to build on the initiatives already established, in relations to the Somali library collection. Establish a Somali reading group, and move the Somali Mother and Toddlers group, to be based at Newington library. Work in partnership with both the Forum and Scanscope to establish both a Somali book fair and Cultural day during 2008.
2. Following the purchase of Latin American Spanish material to be based at East Street Library, and with the help of Latin American Spanish Community Organisations, promote the collections through Carneval Del Pueblo and Noticias, and through a series of events to be based at the library.
3. Investigate the possibility of Amharic library materials, and material to meet the needs of the emerging Arabic/Farsi/Kurdish community from Iraq and Iran. Revisit existing collections already in place for RAS, and investigate the regular rotation and purchase of stock from Bright Books.
4. Evaluate the training program on RAS issues for all staff in collaboration with Refugee Education.
5. Evaluate the demand, and organise ESOL and Citizenship classes in libraries with the help from Adult Learning and the Skills For Life Manager
6. Continue with and establish new initiatives following the training program, where RCOs regularly host meetings within libraries.
7. Disseminate the WTYL project to all staff, through formal training, and through the Community Library Service Manager establishing one-hour training sessions at all libraries. Produce a power-point presentation, representing the one-hour sessions, and place on the libraries shared drive for access for all new members of staff.

SRCF Southwark Refugee Community Forum
CIDU Community Involvement Development Unit
SAVO Southwark Action for Volunteer Organisations
LAWRS Latin American Women's Rights Service
Gharweg Ghana Refugee Welfare group

Mike Prendergast
Community Library Services Manager

Appendix 1

Training proposal

Welcome To Your Library: Southwark Libraries training programme

1 Aim

The proposed training of Southwark Library Service staff aims to:

- Raise awareness of issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers
- Increase staff motivation and confidence in engaging with refugee communities
- Share examples of effective practice
- Facilitate self-evaluation of current practice and planning for service development.

2 Why this training is needed

Southwark is populated by very diverse local communities. According to the 2001 national census these include the following percentages of the total Southwark population:

- White British residents, 52%
- Black African, 16%
- Black Caribbean, 8%
- Other White, 8%

The fastest growing ethnic population in the borough is Black African¹.

Black and minority ethnic communities in Southwark include both established minority ethnic communities, and also more recently arrived groups, such as refugees from across the globe and Eastern Europeans from countries who recently joined the European Union. This diversity is reflected in the school population where over 40% of pupils in Southwark do not speak English with their parents at home. There is an estimated population of between 13,000-16,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Southwark².

The main refugee groups include:

- Latin Americans from Colombia, Ecuador and Bolivia
- Somalis from Somalia, neighbouring countries to Somalia and from European countries such as Holland, Denmark and Finland
- Kosovars from former Yugoslavia

¹ *Independent Review of the Council's Equality and Diversity Framework* Herman Ouseley 2005

² *Examining the numbers, locations, and employment, training, and enterprise needs of London's refugee and asylum seeker communities.* Stephanie Schreiber. LORECA October 2006

- Congolese from DR Congo
- Sierra Leoneans from Sierra Leone

Access and participation lies at the heart of Southwark Council’s vision for Equality and Diversity.

‘We believe that the diversity of our population is one of our most valuable assets. Our vision for Southwark is based on the belief that our community has entitlement to equality of opportunity and access. This entitlement should be built on shared values and mutual respect and sense of belonging, where every member of the community can exercise their right to participate fully in the range of services and activities to which they are entitled’³.

However, refugees and their families who arrive in the UK may have experienced loss, danger, upheaval, fear and family separation. Many refugees face isolation, social exclusion, and may struggle to access the services they need. Research with young refugees⁴, for example, confirms that they are deeply affected by fear, helplessness, poor accommodation and poverty. They commonly experience racism and this restricts their ability to feel safe. This can be compounded by negative, exclusionary language and xenophobia of sections of the British media towards refugees.

Welcome To Your Library has highlighted a lack of awareness of library services amongst refugee communities and a lack of confidence amongst these groups in using services. It has also highlighted the need to re-align stock and information resources, so that they are more representative of the diverse communities living within the borough. If libraries are to engage more meaningfully with excluded and hard to reach groups, the service needs to be more aware of the experiences and needs of refugees, engage proactively with these communities and other services working on their behalf, and plan effective ways of increasing refugee participation.

3. Who is the training for?

- Librarians
- Library Managers
- Assistant Library Managers
- Information Librarians
- Children's Librarians
- Library Assistants
- Sure-start workers

4. Proposed programme

³ Council’s vision with regard to its Equality and Diversity Statement, ref. *Independent Review of the Council’s Equality and Diversity Framework* Herman Ouseley 2005

⁴ *My mum is now my best friend: asylum seeker and refugee families in Glasgow*, Save the Children, 2004; *Uncertain Futures: Children seeking asylum in Wales*, Save the Children, 2005; *Dreams, Struggle and Survivors*, Newham Children’s Fund, 2002

It is proposed that the programme offers two training events:

- A one day course for librarians, library managers or assistant library managers representing each of Southwark's libraries – raising awareness, improving leadership confidence and focus on tackling key issues related to refugee community participation and facilitating service evaluation and planning
- A half-day course for library staff mainly library assistants, on raising awareness and increasing confidence in engaging with, and promoting the participation of, refugee communities. This half-day course will be provided 10 times to facilitate all staff members' attendance.

5. Key outcomes for all staff

- **Knowledge** about refugees and asylum seekers including information on entitlements, recent government legislation, asylum seekers' countries of origin, refugee communities in the UK
- **Understanding** of the barriers faced by refugees in accessing services, including library services, and the important role that libraries can play in supporting integration and social well-being of refugee communities.
- **Reflection** on current service provision

6. Tutors

Tim Spafford and Bill Bolloten will lead the managers' course. The half-day sessions will be led by one of these trainers.

Tim and Bill provide high quality training on refugee issues and work with refugee community organisations and other NGOs in the field. They are also heavily involved in supporting the work of Southwark schools. They have written a number of publications and co-wrote the QCA Pathways to Learning for New Arrivals website, the Home Office and DCSF' Refugee Integration in Education Settings website and are working on refugee integration guidance for the Home Office and Department of Health. For more information, see: <http://www.refugeeeducation.co.uk/>

7. Refugee community participation

Abdul Jibril, of the Chair of the Southwark Somali Advisory Forum will contribute to the library managers' training. He will support understanding of the barriers his community has faced to using library services and planning for more effective service provision.

Appendix 2

Citizenship in Southwark by Country of Birth (Top 15)
Oct 2005 - November 2007



