

SUNDERLAND LIBRARIES – WELCOME TO YOUR LIBRARY

QUARTERLY UPDATE : Final Project
November 2007

1.0. Introduction

Sunderland Libraries are one of the five partner members of the Tyne and Wear Consortium of the Welcome To Your Library Project (WTYL). This is a national project connecting public libraries with refugees and asylum seekers (RAS). The project aims to improve access to and the quality of public library services for refugee communities. The Tyne and Wear Consortium became involved in the project in 2005 and WTYL ended in November 2007. It is expected that by this date activities with the RAS community will have become an integral part of public library work as evidenced.

Our vision and aims

We will connect public libraries and RAS communities to nurture learning, well being and a sense of belonging for all.

We will achieve this through:

- **PARTICIPATION** of refugee communities throughout the work
- **PARTNERSHIPS** to raise awareness and increase public library use
- **CONFIDENT, TRAINED** library staff
- **SHARING GOOD PRACTICE** based on evidence
- **ADVOCACY** for public library work with refugees and asylum seekers

What's the background to the project?

Funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and co-ordinated through the London Libraries Development Agency, the Welcome To Your Library pilot project took place in the London boroughs of Brent, Camden, Enfield, Merton and Newham in 2003-4. In 2005, a further £250,000 from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation enabled Welcome To Your Library to extend the project nationally to the end of 2007. By this time we expect activities to have become an integral part of public library work.

After a competitive selection process, five additional public library partners participated in the national project:

- London Borough of Hillingdon working with Healthy Hillingdon and HOPE (Health Opportunities, Promotion and Education)
- Leicester City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- London Borough of Southwark
- Tyne & Wear (a consortium comprising councils in Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Tyneside and Sunderland)

Sunderland Council and Libraries

The 2001 census gives the current population of Sunderland as 280,807 of which 1.9% is BME and approximately 345 RAS. The RAS are mainly from African countries, Iran, Iraq and Russia. RAS have been placed in 3 main areas of the City, the majority in Hendon and smaller groups in Washington, Roker, Plains Farm and Houghton Le Spring. Sunderland Council also has a legal duty under the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities legislation to ensure it does not discriminate when planning and delivering services.

Sunderland's Annual Library Plan states-

“To provide a responsive and customer focused public library and information service”

Sunderland Council's corporate vision states:

“Sunderland will be a prosperous city, a desirable, safe and healthy place to live, work, learn and visit where all people can reach their full potential”

The Library service contributes to this via the shared priorities, Framework for the Future and Every Child Matters agendas. This links into **The Sunderland Strategy 2004/2007** which identifies 8 strategic priorities for the city, the two that have an impact upon Welcome to Your Library are-

- **Extending Cultural Opportunities.**
- **Creating inclusive communities.**

National Policy Context

Shared Priorities

National policy drivers relevant to the work of Sunderland library service and the WTYL project include:

Framework for the Future

The Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) has published this strategic framework for the public library service in 2003. The policy document outlines the Government's long-term strategic vision for the role of public libraries. Its purpose is to help local and library authorities agree on the key objectives for the public library service with central government and local communities.

Fulfilling Their Potential

This is a national development programme for young people's library services and is a result of a youth steering group set up under the Framework for the Future (see above). It provides a basis for planning a long-term vision and strategy to redefine libraries' relationship with young people.

Shared Priorities

In 2002, the government and Local Government Association agreed, for the first time, a joint statement of shared public service delivery priorities, which identified issues where central government, local councils and other organisations must work together to improve the quality of people's lives.

Every Child Matters

This is the framework developed by the government for improving outcomes for all children and their families to protect them, to promote their well-being and to support all children to develop their full potential. The framework follows a Green Paper published in 2003 on which there was extensive consultation.

Inspiring Learning For All (ILFA)

This is a framework developed by the Museums Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) to improve services in museums, libraries and archives and measure the impact of these on people's learning. It is based on the principles: people, places, partnerships and policies, plans, performance. The Generic Learning Outcomes are headings that any museum, library or archive can use to measure the impact of their service on people's learning. The MLA regional agencies are currently rolling out training for museums, libraries and archives on using the ILFA framework.

The MLA is currently also piloting the development of "Generic Social Outcomes" to measure the impact of museums, libraries and archives on communities in a wider sense. LB Camden library (one of WTYL's pilot authorities) service is participating in this using the work it has been doing with refugees and asylum seekers.

Shared priority outcomes	Every Child Matters outcomes	The Sunderland Strategy 2004-2007	WTYL outcomes
1, Promoting healthier communities	Be healthy	Reduce health inequalities by, supporting families, mothers and children. Working with those communities and groups who experience higher levels of ill health. Improve access to services and achieve a greater balance between preventative and treatment services. Deal with long-term problems such as unemployment, poverty etc.	Refugees and asylum seekers choose to use libraries as an access point for information about a range of relevant services, including health information.
2. Creating safer and stronger communities	Stay safe	Promoting inclusion by challenging existing structures, policies and practise by encouraging the engagement of all communities	RAS are happy to use libraries and are actively encouraged to do so. Verbal Feedback Interview
3. Raising standards in schools	Enjoy and achieve	Promoting innovative and flexible approaches to learning. Providing information, advice and guidance for all.	RAS use libraries as a place for formal and informal learning. Increase attendance at ESOL classes. Formal/Informal

		Targeting children, young people and adults in vulnerable or disadvantaged situations	feedback.
4. Improving the quality of life for children, young people, families at risk	Make a positive contribution	Places to go to, things to do - improving provision for children and young people Increasing children and young people's participation and engagement. Ensuring a sense of place	Libraries work with asylum seekers and refugees to plan and hold events celebrating their cultures and skills and involve the wider community to promote a positive image of RAS.
5, Promoting the economic vitality of communities	Enjoy economic well-being	Creating wealth by developing an entrepreneurial culture and a highly skilled workforce. Generating benefits for all residents.	Refugees and asylum seekers access employment and educational (especially ESOL) opportunities

2.0 Sunderland Action Plan

In March, 2006, Sunderland Libraries began working on an action plan which would feed into the Tyne and Wear Consortium Plan. This plan has now been completed and is divided into four key objectives. These are outlined below :

1. To advocate best practice locally, regionally and nationally regarding the work carried out with RAS
2. To actively remove barriers to libraries for RAS
3. To promote libraries to RAS via outreach, partnerships and publicity
4. To ensure staff are trained and confident when dealing with RAS

3.0 Achievements

3.1 To advocate best practice locally, regionally and nationally regarding the work carried out with Refugees and Asylum Seekers (RAS)

- The Access and Inclusion Librarian attends the multi agency Asylum Seeker Locality Planning Meetings to inform of the services the library provides for RAS i.e. Library Information Sheet. Also to highlight areas the Library Service requires partnership working i.e. return of book stock from vacant properties previously occupied by RAS.
- The Access and Inclusion Librarian attends the multi agency BME frontline support meetings to inform of the services available for RAS i.e. ESOL and Citizenship Courses.
- University of Newcastle at Northumbria undertook research on behalf of the Consortium. The aim of the research was to find out if RAS access their local library services. The report collated all the individual authorities' results and demonstrated that RAS access their local libraries.
- Welcome to Your Library is incorporated into Sunderland Library Service's Annual Library Plan as a key action for improvement.
- Sunderland Library Service has contributed to the Tyne and Wear Consortium regarding projects objectives i.e. Resource Sharing Policy.

3.2 To actively remove barriers to libraries for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- Work undertaken by the Access and Inclusion Librarian in partnership with workers from the North of England Refugee Service, Washington Asylum Seeker Project and the Sunderland Women's Centre to enhance the Foreign Language Collection to reflect the languages spoken in Sunderland.

Foreign Language Collection consists of:

Amharic	Arabic	Bengali	Chinese	Czech
Farsi	French	Guajarati	Hebrew	Hindi
Kurdish	Polish	Portuguese	Punjabi	Russian
Spanish	Turkish	Urdu		

Other languages will be added to the collection as and when new communities establish themselves.

- Sunderland Library Service no longer requires proof of identification for anyone, including RAS to join the Library Service. This was highlighted re the requirement of 2 pieces of identity to join the library and seen as a major barrier to accessing services.
- The Access and Inclusion Librarian has:

- Established links with the Washington Asylum Seeker Project
- Organised and facilitated events to launch Citizenship Test Books and publicise the fact that these books are available to borrow from Sunderland Library service.



- Facilitated stock selection sessions with Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Washington Asylum Seeker Project and the Sunderland Women's Centre. Stock was chosen in the following languages:

Portuguese	Arabic	Urdu
Bengali	Russian	
- Liaised with colleagues from the E Resource Team and Liaze regarding the purchase of the Citizenship Test Computer software and identifying libraries where Citizenship classes are held. Software will be installed at the 2 community libraries where Citizenship classes are held.
- Worked in partnership with colleagues from the Tyne and Wear consortium to develop a Resource Sharing Policy and foreign language collection index to ensure Refugees and Asylum Seeker's requests for materials in their native language are satisfied.
- Co-ordinated Sunderland Library Service celebrating Cultural Diversity Day with a Bollywood Dance Session.



- Coordinated the MLA North East funded “One World Week Programme”. The aim of the programme was to raise awareness of the different cultures in Sunderland, via interactive sessions about Sari dressing and henna hand painting with school children from areas with a history of racial tension i.e. Hendon and Southwick.



- The Learning Librarian in partnership with Sunderland Women’s Centre and WEA has co-ordinated ESOL and Citizenship Courses to be facilitated in community libraries. The result of which is that these courses are now an integral part of Library Programme.

3.3 To promote libraries to Refugees and Asylum Seekers via outreach, partnerships and publicity

- The Access and Inclusion Librarians worked in partnership to promote services to Refugees and Asylum Seekers via:
 - Washington Asylum Seeker Project
 - Sunderland Women’s Centre
 - North of England Refugee Service
 - Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens
 - Bangladeshi Community Centre
 - Information Stall at Sunderland University’s Fresher’s Fair.
 - Information Stall at the World Refugee Day Event held at Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens.

3.4 To ensure staff are trained and confident when dealing with Refugees and Asylum Seekers

- Tyne and Wear Consortium participated in 3 frontline staff training sessions facilitated by John Vincent from the Network and a representative from North of England Refugee Service. The training focused on social inclusion and raising awareness about Refugees and Asylum Seekers and their circumstances.

- Comments from the training included:
 - More information on what is available to help us.
 - Feel better equipped to deal with some problems – language barrier and being more active in the community.

- Sunderland Library Service to cascade information from the consortium's staff training sessions via tool kits. The tool kits will contain information to help staff understand different cultures and sign post Refugees and Asylum Seekers to appropriate services.

4.0 Conclusions

The work undertaken by the Access and Inclusion Librarian as part of the Welcome to Your Library Project has ensured the profile of, and access to Sunderland Library Service has been raised/achieved within the Refugee and Asylum Seeker community. The experience gained has been useful in working with other socially excluded groups and helped develop services tailored to the needs of minority groups.

Working as a consortium has been instrumental in the development of the project within the Tyne and Wear region and has encouraged individual authorities' to share good practice and discuss activities that have not been successful.

Participating in the project has demonstrated that engaging and working with Refugees and Asylum Seeker communities is achievable via partnerships and limited budget. Ensuring the work carried out re: Refugees and Asylum Seekers is embedded in to service plans and delivery by promoting services relevant to the needs of the community i.e. ESOL, but also holding events which bring communities together and work towards community cohesion e.g. "One World Week."

Welcome to Your Library has been invaluable as a tool to raise the awareness of Public Libraries and the partnership work undertaken with Refugees and Asylum Seekers and other socially excluded groups. The work will be instrumental in the planning, delivery and embedding of future programme targeting Refugees and Asylum Seekers and other socially excluded groups via strategies, the Annual Library Plan and Library programme.