

Appendix 3

Library and Information Service Community Libraries highlights 2018 – 2019

1. Blackheath Community Library

- 1.1. Since May 2018 we have increased our Library volunteer staff by 23%. We currently have 3 supervisors covering three morning shifts and a Saturday shift. They are managing the Library very professionally and taking ownership of the service. LBL still provides excellent support and the supervisors are really happy with this. There are three volunteers that are interested in becoming supervisors.
- 1.2. We have 2 Duke of Edinburgh volunteers giving their time after school and on a Saturday. A young woman who has finished her Duke of Edinburgh award asked to continue to volunteer as she enjoyed it so much! We have a student from Blackheath High who volunteers every fortnight as part of her community service. We have also recruited an amazing young volunteer with learning difficulties who has been paired up with a suitable volunteer. We are working collaboratively with a Supported Volunteering Project Officer from Volunteer Centre Greenwich and have agreed to offer volunteering opportunities in the Library to their young volunteers with learning difficulties.
- 1.3. Over the last 12 months, the library has been running well with the introduction of a Creative Writing class and our Reader Group. The Creative Writing Group has just completed its fifth session of a run of eight sessions before a summer break. They are now a group of eight and organise the sessions between library volunteers.

1.4. We celebrated LGBTQ+ History Month with this display.



LGBTQ+ History Month display

1.5. Our creative writing group is just finishing its last session in its eighth term since it started in January 2017. This is an example of clear growth and meeting a community need. This group is organized and run by a Library Supervisor. Our reader group is going strong and has a consistent attendance every week.

1.6. In December it was our knitting group's ten-year anniversary! They knitted us a nativity play and we had a celebration with cake.



Knitting group anniversary cake

1.7. In June 2018, in conjunction with Blackheath Yoga, we started our first chair yoga session. This has since grown in the last eight months to three sessions a week.

1.8. Another new group that started is Mindfulness. This is a six-week introductory course in a group setting, open to all members of the community. They will be booking their third term this Easter.

1.9. Groups also open to library users are:
Chair Pilates
Belly Dancing
Dance your way into the weekend!
Vinyl Bites

1.10. The Art group had a display of their art work in our not-for-profit café during December. This proved very popular and made the café very colourful during the cold winter months.



Art group display

1.11. The 2018 Summer Reading Challenge at Blackheath had 101 starters and 47 finishers (a completion rate of 47%).

1.12. In January we hosted *Table Talk*, a new project aimed at Lewisham citizens to encourage them to come out to a variety of places where older people gather together. The objective is to point older people towards activities, and advice that might be useful, from seated yoga to scams awareness.



Table Talk

1.13. In January this year we celebrated the five-year anniversary of our second hand book-sale. So far it has raised £28,480 over the five years. The Bookshop is run by ex-library volunteers. All the books have been donated by members of the public.



Bookshop

1.14. The Volunteer Christmas party was a successful event with over 60 volunteers from all parts of Age Exchange. The volunteers were recognized with thank-you certificates and lucky dip Christmas presents, which were all donated.



Volunteer Christmas party



Volunteer certificates

volunteers

1.15. We are working in conjunction with Action for Hearing loss. They will be coming into the Exchange every third Thursday to offer a free walk-in hearing aid clinic. We are in the process of organizing a talk on Scams Awareness with Age UK.

1.16. In total we provide over 700 hours of activity classes. Blackheath Community Library continues to be a draw for the community with over 180,000 visitors over the year.

2. Forest Hill Community Library

- 2.1. Forest Hill Library continues to be very much the hub of Forest Hill. As a ward with no dedicated community centre, we very much pride ourselves on going the extra mile and trying to signpost and support as many services as we can, supported by a team of volunteers dedicated to keeping this amazing service ticking over for more than sixty-five hours each week.
- 2.2. With the opening of the Leaf & Groove, the dedicated second-hand book and record shop on Dartmouth Road, we have been able to clear all of the donations we had been collecting, and opened out the space for a variety of groups, including our incredibly popular adults' and children's origami classes.
- 2.3. A new after-school philosophy club is due to start in the spring and we are in discussions to bring in a coding club as another after-school offer. The children's library is as popular as ever, with our two pre-school sessions often leaving standing room only, and a Summer Reading Challenge that really engages with children and boasts numbers comparable (and sometimes better) than even the main hub libraries. We have had a host of children's authors in during the year to read to the children, and our five dedicated PCs for the under 15s are very popular in the late afternoons and evenings.
- 2.4. We continue to provide information on subjects of local interest, from the planning documents for Dartmouth Road improvements to alternative plans for the streetscape, to hosting meetings for all sorts of groups from the various organs of the Forest Hill Society and local ward oversight groups, to space for local interest groups, such as Clean Air Forest Hill; The Friends of Albion Millennium Green; Lively Minds and numerous others.

3. Manor House Community Library

- 3.1. It has been a very busy year at Manor House. Visitors to both the library itself and the multi-purpose function spaces have rocketed as the public realises we are back open seven days a week. With a new IT manager looking after the computers we can boast a 99% up-time on machinery, even if we still suffer the occasional internet service provision hiccup!
- 3.2. Our expanded classics sections, in both the main and junior libraries, have been a big hit and we continue to offer a 'suggest-a-book' box that helps us to be able to offer a more dynamic demand-led offering. The Summer Reading Challenge was again incredibly popular this year, with a very high conversion rate of children who started the challenge seeing it through to the final book and getting their medals.
- 3.3. We hosted the 2018 City of Stories event, with sell-out workshops and a final day that was so over-subscribed we had to change the venue from the largest of our function rooms into the library itself just so we could provide spaces for all those wishing to attend!
- 3.4. International Refugee Week saw us put on an exhibition of paintings and other works by refugees, mostly displaced from fighting in the Middle East. We also hosted a one-woman play during the centenary of the suffrage movement; a day of guided tours for Open-House London and two weekends of exhibitions as part of Lee Green Open Studios. We also hosted a very successful Lee Green Consortium event, providing a thank-you and chance to chat for all of the voluntary groups that make up the Consortium across the ward.
- 3.5. After-school activities are becoming incredibly popular, with the after-school club, lego engineering club and creative writing activities and our free GCSE and A-Level Tutoring for Chemistry and Science that happens every Sunday morning in the run-up to exam season.
- 3.6. We were also very pleased to host out-going Mayor Sir Steve Bullock as he officially re-opened Manor House and unveiled the People's Patchwork, happily now installed permanently on display in the Manor House Foyer.

4. New Cross Community Library (New Cross Learning)

- 4.1. We continue to offer a wide range of regular events to reach different parts of the community. Baby Bounce flourishes on Tuesdays and Saturdays. On Tuesdays we are joined by a nursery and therefore have a regular 20+ babies joining us. Saturdays are not so well-attended but we are more likely to get Dads joining us. On Wednesday mornings a tutor leads with Basic IT skills, tailor-made to suit the individual. In the afternoon, the tutor assists with employability needs, job searches, CV writing and on-line applications. On Wednesdays we have the Junior Film Show, an opportunity for families to attend a cinema treat. On Thursdays after school and Saturday morning we have a Coding Club, where 7-12 year olds can learn to do initial computer programming. On Thursday evenings there is a Conversation Class where people of different nationalities unite in English conversation with the help of a facilitator in order to improve their language skills. On Saturday afternoons we have Knitting and Make a Friend, where fifteen regular knitters with lots to say are very ready to give a helping hand when those tricky patterns prove difficult.
- 4.2. There has been an influx of requests to assist people in need of on-line services, like Blue Badge Holders, Freedom Passes, Oyster 60+ passes.
- 4.3. We take in book donations for our bookshop and on-line sales. We also have Big Book Sales three times per year, usually held on Sundays. All donated books are processed by the team of volunteers in order to get the best price, with all monies going to the upkeep of the building and utilities.
- 4.4. Another financial stream, necessary to pay the bills, is the hiring out of the space to regular organisations for meetings after the library is closed to the public.
- 4.5. We have become a reliable printing service in an area where there appears to be none of these facilities, again part of our financial stream.
- 4.6. We have a continuous increase in membership with more and more internet-cafes disappearing in the area and more and more things needed doing on-line.
- 4.7. We are a drop-off point for Food Bank collection which is then taken to St James' church for distribution. The managers there are able to issue the vouchers needed to get the food parcels.
- 4.8. We have allocated an office space within the library for Credit Union, who share the same ethos and mission statement as New Cross Learning.
- 4.9. We actively encourage volunteers from the local secondary school to enlist here for their Duke of Edinburgh Awards at the various levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold.
- 4.10. We hold art exhibitions and if an outside artist is not available, then a display of books is organised for the relevant month.
- 4.11. We try not refuse young people the opportunity of work experience.

5. **Torridon Road Community Library (The Archibald Corbett Community Library, Arts and Heritage Centre)**

- 5.1. Our volunteer numbers have increased to over 40 active volunteers covering nearly 900 hours a week between them. At the same time our activities calendar has expanded to around 30 classes running throughout every week - including Tai Chi, music groups for young children, and a new reading group.
- 5.2. On top of those regular activities we have been very proud to host regular peer-pressure defence workshops run for young people by the charity Hope UK, an Afro-Caribbean hair-care course for young girls, The Catford Arts' Trail, and our second large-scale craft festival of our own for Easter.
- 5.3. Of our special events over £1000 was raised by our Christmas Craft festival, and our room hire income has increased to almost £10,000 for this period - which allowed us to trial the employment of a freelance full-time manager. This has had a huge positive impact - allowing us to move forward on various projects for which we have secured funding for 2019 onwards.
- 5.4. One example of this is transferring all our stock onto wheeled shelving units and fitting blackout blinds on our windows to allow us to transform the whole Library into a large venue/performing arts space, with a projector, screen and sound system to come. This was funded by L&Q.
- 5.5. At the time of writing, we advertised for a 3 year full-time salaried manager, which has been made possible by funding from The National Lottery, along with an assistant manager to come later. We hope to be self-sufficient enough at the end of that 3 year period, in order to continue both roles without additional funding.
- 5.6. An online feature about our Library is available on The Community Business Fix Podcast by Power To Change. Excerpts of the interviews they took from volunteers are included in the following quotes.

Libraries get asked the most amazing array of questions, but more and more now, because ... there is no Citizens Advice Bureau left in Catford, you are getting a lot of customers in asking detailed questions like 'My housing benefit has gone pear-shaped', 'How does universal credit work?', 'I've got to log on to a computer because I've got to log on to the Job Seekers site.' There are a lot of community social activities that you have to get involved in as well, and also advising some of the customers that come in about how to use the computer – some of our customers are really unsure of how to use a mouse even, or, 'I'm trying to find this website. How do I find that?'

Whilst volunteering I am able to develop my social skills, help the local community and have fun. I am able to meet kind, generous people who have the library's best interests at heart. It is an amazing community where volunteers work hard so customers feel comfortable when visiting. The library consistently offers a warm atmosphere for the community with activities for all ages. I love to volunteer at the library due to the kind staff and the impact the library has on the community.

6. Crofton Park Community Library

6.1. Crofton Park Community Library is run by Eco Communities and is at the heart of the SE4 community. Our library is the natural place where our users can find help, support and reinforce their links, and we are very popular in our area. The library has its own small café, regular well-attended events, and the *Crofton Books* vintage bookshop which is open every day and keeps our beautiful building even more accessible to the public. Last Christmas we tested the sale of vinyl and as it has been proved very successful we are re-launching it as “Vinyl of Crofton” at the end of April 2019. We offer other services, such as internet access, printing, photocopying and also hire our space for meetings and other local activities.

6.2. Our Summer Reading Challenge was very enjoyable and more than 60% of the children who enrolled finished it. In order to give more opportunities for our kids to complete their challenge, we made the last day the “Summer Reading Challenge Final Blast” with craft activities and thematic dressing.



Summer Reading Challenge Final Blast

6.3. Our local Croffest festival becomes Croffmas at Christmas time and this year we were at the centre of most of the activities. We held the Pet Christmas craft activity and competition, and our local Indie authors read their favourite Christmas stories. We also had Christmas Trees on sale in the forecourt raising funds for us.

6.4. We teamed up with our resident Crofton Park history group for the talk “The Story of Crofton Park” and it was a huge success. All the Croffest events were full to capacity.



The Story of Crofton Park

6.5. *Our Punk is dead* literary event was organised by Crofton Books to help us raise funds for our library. We hosted a string of interesting poets and authors talking about the Punk Movement. The event was attended by more than 70 people.

6.6. We are happily in demand by Duke of Edinburgh trainees. We have had 7 DoE trainees in the last year and they helped us reorganise our children’s library, and were very creative and hands-on. Thanks to them we now have new signs and new dividers for our series and they created some lovely displays.

6.7. This year we have increased our presence on Social Media. Our Facebook page has gone from 420 followers to 651 in the last year; Twitter from 1650 to 1772; and Instagram from 250 to 505. We have a weekly “Word of the Week” which started in June 2018 and is a very good conversational starting point.

6.8. The library hosts a variety of regular events on a weekly basis:

- *Under 5s*: Our fabulous Sharon has been organising this group every Thursday and it is always packed with craft activities with specific themes such as LGBT, Chinese New year, Springtime etc.



*LGBT themed activity:
celebrating diversity*



Chinese New Year Craft



Springtime Craft

- *Baby Bounce*: This takes place every Friday and is always organised by volunteers. It has an average participation of 80 people per session.
- *Code Club*: Every Saturday our Crofton Code Club volunteer Marc organises our local group of young coders, both boys and girls. This March they were inspired by International Women's Day, and created their own interactive game based on Julia Child's recipes.
- *Xr Eco Thursday*: The aim of this new craft club for under eights is to nurture a sense of love and care for our natural world through arts and crafts, songs and storytelling. It has been well-attended from the start in January 2019.
- *ESOL learners and Digital Inclusion classes* are delivered on a weekly basis at Crofton Park with an excellent rate of success as 905 of the learners move onto Entry Level 1 and 2. Aurelie of *EnglishMyWay* also provides help with UC, benefits and CV writing. Aurelie's work at Crofton Park has been vital to support people in need of help.

6.9. There are also a number of monthly events:

- *Crofton Park Book club* meets every last Tuesday and it is at full capacity. We are thinking of branching out and having another one, maybe dedicated to crime novels.
- *Cantonese Sing Along for children and families* is on every third Saturday of the month and run by our dedicated Chloe.
- *Crofton Park History Group* hold a drop-in session every first Saturday of the month and it is very popular.

7. Grove Park Community Library

- 7.1. Grove Park Community library continues to be committed to serving the local community. We offer the use of computers each day for various reasons, including for printing, job searches and more.
- 7.2. There is also library space for people to work on their own laptops, and many come to browse and borrow/return books, use the cafe and browse the Eco Shop.
- 7.3. There are class visits during term time, where Reception through to Y1 rotate their visits. The whole school visits the library during World Book Week.
- 7.4. During half term there are activities for children on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- 7.5. Once a week there are knitting and keep fit classes along with computer lessons and scrabble.
- 7.6. Occasional events include a Christmas Fair; tea parties; a children's tea party (including a teddy bear's picnic); day trips and meals out for the elderly; and a High Tea with the Mayor of Lewisham.
- 7.7. L&Q have run a few events at the library, including a Parenting Skills course.
- 7.8. The children's library space is rented out on a Sunday morning.
- 7.9. The library is working towards becoming a sustainable building for the local community.

8. Pepys Community Library

- 8.1. The library membership and usage have increased significantly over the last year. Enquiries have been made regarding an extension of our opening hours and new activities are currently under consideration by the new committee.
- 8.2. The *Befrienders* group which had previously been attending alternate Wednesdays is now attending every Wednesday and feedback from this group has been very positive in terms of giving people isolated in the community an opportunity to socialise: “I wouldn’t miss it for the world” was one response. They enjoy singing around the piano, a new addition to the library, and have the opportunity to eat together.
- 8.3. Each Tuesday there are Pilates sessions and feedback for these sessions has, again, been very positive.
- 8.4. We won funding to provide the *Mama J Lunch Club*, showing people how to cook healthy meals from products they may receive from the food bank. This funding was achieved with local residents and the befrienders group; there will be a book to follow.
- 8.5. Over the summer, a group of Syrian refugee families attended twice weekly where they had ESOL classes, had lunch and explored opportunities and employment around Lewisham. This was in partnership with the Pepys Community forum and the local authority.
- 8.6. In autumn 2018 a poetry night was held, hosted by Steve Tasane, a local poet/writer. The feedback from this was also positive.
- 8.7. A Halloween party held for local children was well-attended.
- 8.8. On World Kindness Day, Bernadette Russell, writer of the book *Kindness*, ran a successful workshop called “What is Kindness”.
- 8.9. At Christmas four young girls from Italy attended the library for work experience and contributed to preparing Christmas celebrations. A community Christmas party was held.
- 8.10. On Friday 8th March various workshops were held to celebrate International Women’s Day.
- 8.11. Over Easter a number of activities were held for children including an Easter egg hunt and Easter card making.
- 8.12. In the last year steady progress has been made in terms of engaging with and providing support/services to the local community particularly with computer use and accessing literature. Another example is when an International Community Development Consultant came with a number of young men from the homeless centre. We supported them, gave them food and helped them with searching for accommodation and employment.

9. Sydenham Community Library

- 9.1. Sydenham Community Library continues to be at the heart of the community it serves, with a very dedicated team.
- 9.2. We have a children's Book Club and at Easter there was a party at which certificates were awarded.
- 9.3. We have regular pop-up table sales outside and inside.
- 9.4. We had a successful Summer Reading Challenge and competitions for painting and a summer story.
- 9.5. In the autumn we had a famous Black inventors display for Black History Month, and a Guy Fawkes and Firework children's painting competition.
- 9.6. In October, we had a fun palaces weekend, where we painted our own castle, children and adults did crafts, devised an interactive computer game based on the library (beware the flying cups of tea), and learned African dance moves. We saw a virtual beehive and a very real police horse, developed characters and stories with Inkheads, created animations using an app, and followed clues to exit from the Philosophy Escape Room despite the armed guards.
- 9.7. We were a stop on the Sydenham Artists' Trail with art displays throughout the library.
- 9.8. At Christmas, we had painting and crafts for children; the Children's Book Club Christmas story, certificates and prize giving; a Christmas fair and Santa's Grotto; a children's Christmas party; and a Seniors Christmas party. There was a performance of Cinderella, a lantern making workshop, carol singing, and the Mayor lighting the outdoor Christmas tree.
- 9.9. The library is used for meetings by local groups such as the Sydenham Assembly.
- 9.10. For adults we offer a book club and a writing group every other Tuesday, with 4–7 attending, covering story and biography writing and a poetry composition. There is an adult crafts session (term time only every Thursday), offering card making, jewellery and painting; and a knitting club every Saturday with 15-20 members. There is a mobility exercise group every Tuesday, with 8-12 attendees. Chrissie continues to offer free advocacy, by appointment only. There are free hearing support sessions every other Tuesday, for hearing advice and hearing aid accessories.
- 9.11. For children we have a book club with a waiting list, and Baby Bounce every Tuesday with 15-18 parents and 20 babies.



Prize-giving for children's book club



Christmas party

10. Conclusion

- 10.1. The examples above demonstrate the creativity and talent of Lewisham's Community Libraries. Our partners continue to show incredibly valuable and valued commitment to "the promotion of books and reading" across the borough, supporting libraries and residents, giving back to their local communities and drawing from local talent and passion.
- 10.2. The partner organisations are often called upon to exemplify local participation, beyond the public library world. They are unrivalled advocates for the public library service, culture, collaboration, and imagination. They demonstrate how, at a challenging time, communities can come together to deliver quality services "with" (rather than "to") local communities.