

Appendix 3

Community Libraries Highlights 2016 – 2017

Three new Community Libraries (The Archibald Corbett Community Library, Forest Hill Library and Manor House Library) have come into being since October 2016. They join the existing six Community Libraries (Grove Park, Sydenham, Crofton Park, Pepys, New Cross and Blackheath Village), which continue to provide a wide range of services and enhance the lives of people living, working and studying nearby.

*I was like that person in the advert on TV, you know the old frail person looking out at the world through the curtains. Lonely, you know?
I noticed even my skin was turning grey. Really.
Then I started coming here and it's different – it's a light place, do you know what I mean?
And I started to come to the knitting (club) and I teamed up with Ann here. It's just a place to meet people, to start to socialise again.
What would I be doing if I didn't come here? Probably just sitting on my own at home, not seeing anyone. I don't want a lot of people coming to my house and I like my own company. But I can come here to be with people – I look at myself as I was two years ago and I can't recognise that person.*

Community Library User

Blackheath Community Library (hosted by Age Exchange)

The past 6 months have seen several changes to our library. One of our key supervisors who acted as coordinator left; this resulted in some challenges which have been well managed with the appointment of two additional supervisors. We have six new volunteers to date, although Saturdays are still problematic to staff. Our Tuesday 'library lates' trial was a disappointment with a very low take-up – so we decided to reduce the opening hours on Tuesday.

"I love being a volunteer at the Blackheath Community Library. Volunteering with my children has resulted in the creation of new friendships within the village. There is a strong sense of community and it's great bumping in to people who now know me from the library."

Nicole, Library Supervisor

"We are so thankful for this little gem of a library – the volunteers are always helpful and friendly."

Lisa, Mum to Toby

Library users include a high number of mothers and children. Our rhyme time sessions and French Club for under-fives are both very popular, although we are now looking to recruit a new volunteer to facilitate rhyme time. We are also trying to encourage older readers and we hope that the activities run and supported by Age Exchange – which include creative writing classes and a reading group- will help build this.

Volunteers are pleased with the higher level of input from Lewisham i.e. having a link librarian on site has been very reassuring, in terms of assistance with refreshing stock, day

to day administration etc. The change-over to SPARK is progressing steadily: supervisors are managing the training and are providing additional support where needed.

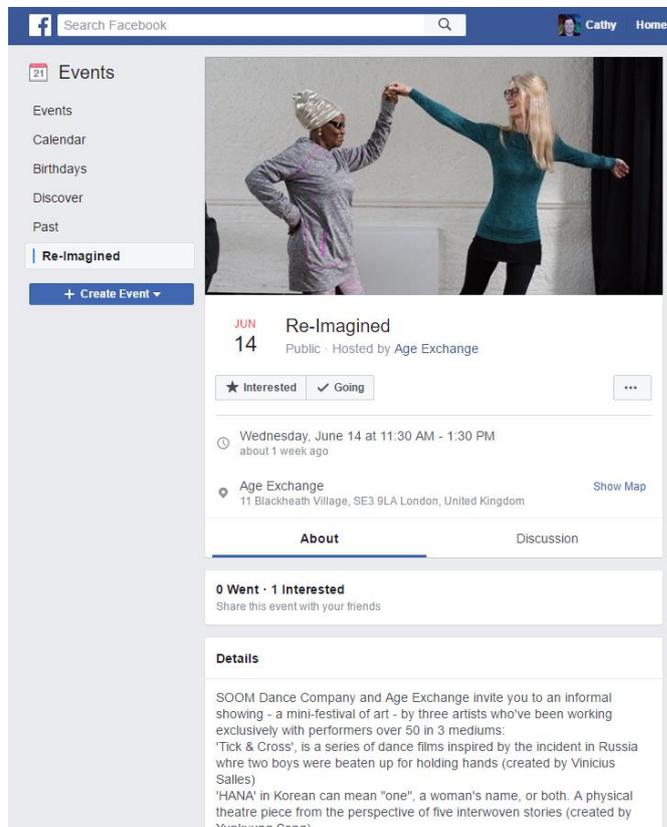
Computers provided by Age Exchange have recently been upgraded as we consistently endeavour to provide a high level of service to visitors, members and users.

In the year running from April 2016 to April this year, Blackheath had an average of 23 volunteers per month.

Nearly all of the three hour slots on the rota are covered by two volunteers, so over the course of the 48 hours that the library is open, this equates to almost one hundred hours of volunteer time given every week.

Blackheath Village Community Library is very much part of Age Exchange, so many library volunteers are also involved in running the Time-Out Award winning (2016) café upstairs, or answering general enquiries about Age Exchange on the main desk.

Age Exchange was shortlisted for the Guardian Charity of the Year Award 2016 and has a very active online presence, tweeting as @Age_Exchange. The Friends of Age Exchange, many of whom volunteer in the library, tweet as @FriendsofAE. Age Exchange is on Facebook at @ageexchange and posts regularly.



Two library volunteers, involved since the library was established in 2011, also organise a monthly book sale to help towards the cost of overheads. The sale attracts collectors and local people alike and raises on average about £500 per month. Last month (May 2017) it hit the £600 mark.

Forest Hill Library (hosted by V22)

Forest Hill Library has had a very interesting and fruitful six months; the transition from staff operated to volunteer run library was always going to be a challenge, but with support from the Library Service and a wonderful group of local volunteers we have been able to extend opening times and keep to our schedule without a single unexpected closed day. We have seen a number of people use volunteering at the library as a springboard to gaining employment, we've enjoyed the youthful enthusiasm of Duke of Edinburgh volunteers and we have been able to keep virtually all of the previous groups and sessions going to cater for the whole community from babies to those in their nineties. We have recently added Digital Inclusion sessions to our timetable and have plans for a writers group; born from the workshops we have held with our writer in residence as part of the City of Stories program.

Many users have benefited from the installation of new computers and a faster fibre broadband line. Class visits are now on the rise as we widen engagement with local schools

and bring philosophy lessons into the children’s library with the aid of The Philosophy Foundation, our Anchor Tenant in the redeveloped offices upstairs in the library building.

We have lots of plans for the summer, with a programme of workshops and special interest groups benefitting from use of the community space at neighbouring Louise House, which we are lucky to be able to use for some of our current groups.

Even before the library came into being as a Community Library, Forest Hill (@librarySE23) had established a vibrant, engaging social media voice. Their Twitter account now has 715 followers and well over 400 likes.



I started volunteering because I love reading and books. I'd spent a lot of my time in libraries, browsing or reading and my experiences were always fantastic. I wanted to ensure that other people have as great an experience as I had. I love being in charge of Library Operations as I get to meet the professional library staff from Lewisham and build great relationships with them, I can organise events and make important changes to benefit the users of the library. Plus I know that all the time I put in will be worth it, even after an exhausting day.

Community Library Volunteer

Manor House Library (hosted by V22)

The initial few weeks since reopening Manor House have proved very encouraging, with fantastic support from the local community.

We have quickly been able to re-establish a library that is open seven days a week, and have begun the process of training an eager batch of volunteers with the aid of some of Lewisham's finest library staff. We have no less than three book groups based at Manor House, plus two very busy rhyme-time sessions for younger members in the Children's library.

With some diverse user groups populating the rooms with classes



ranging from yoga and Pilates to knitting and mental health awareness, we are able to cast a wide net and appeal to many corners of the community. While it is obviously very early days, the signs are encouraging as people begin to flood back into the library.

Like their sister library in Forest Hill, Manor House have a friendly, vibrant online presence. Since launching on Twitter in January 2017 as @MHLibraryLee, they have established a following of 366.

Eco Communities hosted libraries (Crofton Park, Grove Park, Pepys and Sydenham)

The libraries continue to be at the centre of community life, providing activities and services for people of all ages and needs – as well as supplying people with books to inform and fire the imagination.

Crofton Park

In Crofton Park:

- Under 5's group continues to run on Thursdays during term time.
- Baby Bounce continues to run on Fridays during term time.
- Every third Saturday each month we have a Cantonese sing-a-long - all are welcome as this is done in English & Cantonese
- The Library was involved with Croftmas at the end of November and Croffest@Brockleymax on 3rd June 2017. Both are in place to raise the profile of all businesses along the strip of shops where the library is.
- On first Saturday each month we have a children's reading by Cat (with or without assistance). The first of these events took place on 3rd June.
- Christmas tree sales for three weeks in December.
- Computer/laptop sales during the period mentioned.
- ESOL teaching, Digital Inclusion training, Homework Club (recently started) and pre-natal NCT classes taking place most weeks, particularly during term time.
- Book Club in discussion with one of the volunteers. Will possibly start at the end of the summer

One of our customers, who visits once a week, is involved with a 'community' library in the Cambridge area. She regularly asks what types of things we do for different aspects of running the library, e.g. raising funds, support from her local council, etc.

Regular customers come in to support different parts of the library, for example, café, book shop, computer use, lending library. As our two support members from the Library Service settle in I am creating a positive, constructive working relationship with them.

In the year running from April 2016 to April this year, Crofton Park had an average of 23.5 volunteers per month.

Grove Park

Grove Park Library continues to be a welcoming space at the heart of its local community. Links are good between the Library and partners like The RingWay Centre and Community Connections.

The regular groups at Grove Park Community Library are popular and well attended:

Group	Audience	Regularity	Average attendees
Knitting group	Adults	Weekly	8 – predominantly seniors
Sit Down Exercise	Senior citizens, people recovering from illness and injury	Weekly	8
Art and Craft Group	Adults	Weekly	5 – again predominantly seniors
121 IT sessions	Adults	By appointment, weekly sessions	5 sessions per week

Grove Park also have a “resident” digital champion who is over 60. Staff and volunteers help about 7 seniors with Freedom passes or Blue Badges every month as well as welcoming children from Marvels Lane School who come in every week.

In 2016, library staff and volunteers helped combat isolation for older people by running a Scrabble club, Summer trip to Whitstable and a Christmas lunch.

Pepys

Pepys Community Library provides a service for the community, run by volunteers and hosted by Eco Communities. The library provides access to a wide range of books including fiction, health information, biography, coding, picture books, arts and science. It also gives local people access to a study space, free PC access and free WiFi access. There is a newly installed fair trade café in 2014 within Pepys Community Library and the team there have run two local history events this year.

Pepys Community Library’s activities include:

- Exercise every two weeks where 12 seniors attend, improving wellbeing and balance in older people in the community.
- Creative arts and crafts every two weeks with 15 seniors members attending.
- Staff helping 5 seniors with Freedom Passes and Blue Badges every month.

Eco Communities plan to work with other local partners to expand the opening hours in September. The collaboration of local activists and residents also hope to start more arts and crafts sessions in the library. They hope to set up a history gallery in the building.

Sydenham

Some of the recent activities at Sydenham have included: Art and craft groups for adults and children, private tutoring in Maths and English, a knitting group, a group for Seniors regularly attended by the Safer Neighbourhoods team and involving chair-based

I find it satisfying to know that we provide a welcoming and effective service that people really need. We are a first port of call for people who need assistance with a wide range of needs.

It is fun and interesting to work with such a variety of people, to know that we can make a small difference to people’s lives and also introduce them to the joy of reading.

Community Library Volunteer

exercise. There is also a weekly bridge club. Sydenham has a thriving and very active creative writing / book making group for primary-school aged children.

Sydenham has regular visits by local schools, St Philip Neri use the library every few weeks with their Year 3 and Year 4 classes and have recently completed a rain forest collage for the library wall.

Adamsrill also visit every few weeks on a Thursday, bringing their Reception and Year 1 & 2 classes into the space. There are also regular visits from Angel Faces – preschool, who bring 10 children and 5 adults to enjoy what the library has to offer.



Figure 1
Library users get to grips with tablet technology as part of the GLA funded “My WiFi” project, Sydenham Community Library

The regular groups at Sydenham Community Library are popular and well attended:

Group	Audience	Regularity	Average attendees
Craft Group	Adults	Weekly (Thursdays)	1 tutor and 8-10 adults
Song & Rhyme	Babies and toddlers	Weekly (Thursdays)	1 Coordinator; 16 - 17 babies and toddlers; 12 14 adults (parents etc.)
Exercise Group	Adults	Weekly (Tuesdays)	1 tutor, 9 - 12 adult participants
Children's Book Club (creative writing group)	Primary school aged children	Weekly (Tuesdays)	9 children over 6 and 5 children under 6
Reading Group	Adults	Monthly (first Tuesday)	1 coordinator and 6 - 8 adults
IT Lessons	Adults	Twice weekly (Tuesdays and Thursdays)	2 tutors and 7 adult learners
Bridge Club	Adults	Twice weekly (Mondays and Wednesdays)	24 - 28 each session
Children's Craft and Arts Group	Children	Monthly (Saturday)	1 tutor, 1 assistant and 15 children
Hearing Aid sessions from Lewisham Hospital	All ages	Monthly (Monday)	Drop-in session, approx. 5 people per session

Sydenham have plans to re-launch their weekly Coding Club on Saturday mornings and the library manager, Christine, is being trained to run sessions for seniors to help them use tablet technology. This is part of the “My WiFi” GLA funded project.

The Archibald Corbett Community Library, Torridon Road

The Archibald Corbett Society and the Corbett Residents Association joined forces to create the Archibald Corbett Community Library, Arts and Heritage Centre as a charity and took over the management of Torridon Road Library building on the 24 October 2016 and the adjacent Children's Centre on 1 April 2017.

The building and existing library service have been developed into a community hub trading as the Corbett Community Centre to become the focus for residents of all ages, including those with learning/physical disabilities, to meet and take part in activities and events which is drawing the community together and creating greater cohesion within the ward.

'Congratulations to those involved. The library is greatly improved since you took over. It is a credit to the area. Well done!'

'The ACCL is tremendous! Thank you putting in all the time and effort to keep it going. I'd be lost without somewhere to sit and think for an hour.'

'We love singing with Jo and Olivia. We come to Story Time then Bounce and Rhyme, both amazing activities. Thank you.'

Comments from users of the Archibald Corbett Community Library

The project is completely volunteer led, delivering over twenty activities per week for parents and children aged 0 to 5, primary school aged children, secondary school children, young people, families and for older people, as well as delivering a library service and arts and heritage events and activities.

A digital learning zone has been established recently where volunteers help residents to fill in local and central

government forms, such as blue badge renewals, on-line to compensate for the Council withdrawing its telephone advice service and the closure of the Catford Citizens Advice Bureau due to it being moved to Lewisham.

There is now a pressing need to develop a confidential IT area away from the main open space of the Library to allow for private one to one consultations to take place as some residents are seeking welfare, debt, housing and benefits advice as well as filling forms in online.

On the whole communication with the Library support team has been good in liaising on promotions and events and the development of new stock and Downham Library has been very supportive and helpful as our link Library.

After spending a few years out of work, caring for a parent, I needed something to boost my confidence and prepare me for working again – so I signed up to volunteer when the library reopened.

At first I was very nervous and overwhelmed, being in a big team, but it wasn't long before we were working together on big projects and achieving more than we expected!

Everything from promoting our events, reorganising the stock, troubleshooting computer problems or doing admin has taught me a lot about my own abilities.

Being in such a nurturing atmosphere and being a bigger part of the community has really helped my anxiety.

I've gained an incredible amount of confidence – not just in my professional skills but in my social life too.

Peter, Julia and the ACCLAHC leaders have such a positive and caring attitude and I have massively benefitted from being part of their team – I've even started applying for jobs again!

Volunteer at the Corbett Library

New Cross Community Library Service (hosted by New Cross Learning – NXL)

The ACCL have hosted immersive yoga sessions, a roaringly popular Harry Potter night with over 200 people attending and the headline event for this year's Spine Festival – a family arts festival held in 13 London Boroughs.

The event was a piece of theatre by Half Moon Theatre called "Big Wow, Small Wonder" and was performed to a very appreciative Year 3 class from Sandhurst Juniors. They also hosted Ian Simons of Other World Arts, who lead a workshop around identity during the half term preceding the Festival. The workshop attracted well over 35 children and their families.

The Library is a registered "Dementia Friendly" space so all staff have been given training in assisting people living with Dementia and there are plans in place for some specific activity with Dementia sufferers and their families.

The library has visits from nine classes from Torridon Road Junior School every three weeks, as well as a weekly visit from a class of children experiencing ADHD.

Over the course of a month, the ACCL has around 50 individuals volunteering in the library, including some young people completing work experience or Duke of Edinburgh Awards. In total in May 2017, 778 volunteer hours were given.

New Cross Learning is now officially open six days a week thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, which has enabled the New Cross Gate Trust to offer employability workshops in the library space on a Monday and a Friday. This four-year grant also helps sustain NXL longer-term as it continues to deliver services to the wider community.

Another new partnership is with the Credit Union, who are now in the library every Tuesday and Wednesday, with plans to make NXL their full-time home following their departure from the Albany. If and when the local Post Office closes, NXL are working with the Credit Union to make an ATM available as well.

As part of their involvement in the Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), NXL have secured £1K funding from the New Cross Gate Trust and a further £1,200 from the Telegraph Hill Pantomime. This funding will enable them to provide two coach trips (each with a capacity of 144 people) to the seaside. These trips will be open to families living in the New Cross area and which include children who are taking part in the SRC.

Ongoing refurbishment of the building continues at pace, with new shutters fitted very recently and disabled friendly doors for the main entrance and public toilet being installed shortly. NXL have also purchased two additional PCs with desks that are suitable for wheelchair users.



Figure 2
Artwork made in a workshop about identity lead by Other World Arts as part of the 2017 Spine Festival, ACCL

Alongside their regular weekly round of film showings, baby bounce and groups like the knitting club, the library also hosts a drop-in for people claiming universal credits every Wednesday and regularly hosts City professionals (including lawyers, accountants and programmers) as part of the Benefactor scheme. Benefactor sees companies giving their employees volunteering opportunities to benefit the community. In New Cross Learning they have helped members of the public with job applications, benefits application forms, covering letters, CVs and tax returns. They have also helped with the administration of NXL. The scheme seems to be rewarding on both sides, with many of the professionals coming in to volunteer independently, particularly if they happen to live nearby.

John Hegley, the renowned poet, recently starred in a fundraiser at the library (and joined!) and on 21st June a London bishop will be paying a visit.



Figure 3
"We Are Deptford" tea party, with storyteller Bernadette Russell, New Cross Learning

In the year running from April 2016 to April this year, New Cross had an average of 608 volunteer hours per month.

Their regular groups continue to attract a good audiences ranging from 7 to over 140!