

Appendix 3

Library and Information Service Community Libraries highlights 2019 – 2021

1. The Lewisham Model

- 1.1. Lewisham recognises the positive contribution that – at a time of reducing resources – the local community can make. This contribution goes beyond maintaining access to the buildings and harnesses energies and expertise to integrate the interests of partner organisations and the needs of the community.
- 1.2. Since 2010, the Lewisham Model has provided an opportunity to re-design the library service which is delivered to residents “with” residents. One where service delivery is understood as a collaborative, peripatetic presence embodied by the Community Engagement Team, a group of front line staff who engage audiences where they are: in libraries, in community libraries, in schools, doctor surgeries, etc.
- 1.3. Through this approach community groups and organisations acquired and developed alternative services within the former library buildings with no rental payments, as long as they commit to maintaining the buildings and keeping them open to the community. Crucially, the Lewisham Model has also meant that the Council can still provide Council library services from those buildings, even after they have been transferred.
- 1.4. The Council remains responsible for the books, for the shelving, for the self-service terminals and for the library catalogue. It maintains the stock to the standard it applies to all its collections. It promotes reader development programmes and trains the staff and volunteers at the community libraries.
- 1.5. The Council never transferred its statutory responsibility to deliver library services to third parties. The community library provision is the responsibility of the Library and Information Service. However, the Service benefits from the commitment of the partner organisations to promote books and reading and offer access to library services in the buildings they are responsible for.
- 1.6. In all cases, the partner organisation, as well as signing a lease or premises management agreement with the council, committed to supporting the provision of library services in their buildings at no cost to the council.
- 1.7. The examples that follow demonstrate the creativity and talent of each community library in the borough. 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.
- 1.8. 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

Hub Libraries

Catford
Deptford Lounge
Downham
Lewisham

Community Libraries

Blackheath (Age Exchange)
Crofton Park (Eco Communities)
Grove Park (Eco Communities)
Forest Hill (V22)
Manor House (V22)
Sydenham (V22)
New Cross (NX Learning)
Torridon Road (Corbett Group)

challenging time, communities can come together to deliver quality services “with” (rather than “to”) local communities.

2. Blackheath Community Library

- 2.1. The library was closed from March 2020 to 6 June 2021, with substantial disruption to all operations, including a reduction in volunteers from 26 to six, and a reduction to only one supervisor.
- 2.2. The Reminiscence Centre is now opened two days a week (Tuesday and Thursday) with limited hours.
- 2.3. A perspex screen has been installed on the desk as a safety barrier between volunteers and customers. Library volunteers wear facemasks while on shift. Customer numbers were limited to two households or four individuals due to the space constraint. After 19 July these restrictions were no longer in place, however due to the lack of space and adequate ventilation Blackheath have decided to continue to limit the numbers of customers.
- 2.4. Blackheath is running the Summer reading challenge as a digital service this year.
- 2.5. Customers are slowly starting to return to the library, although in the last quarter they were opened for a total of 24 hours with 6 volunteers.
- 2.6. Blackheath are in the process of recruiting more volunteers and will look at opening more days/hours in the coming weeks.

3. Crofton Park Community Library

- 3.1. Crofton Park Community Library is run by Eco Communities. It is a library hub at the centre of the community, serving Crofton Park, Brockley, Ladywell and Honor Oak areas. Our library is the natural place for our users to find help, support, and to reinforce their networks and we are very popular in our area. We offer other services such as internet access, printing, photocopying and we hire our space for meetings and other local activities.

Highlights of 2019 – 2020

- 3.2. We had a very busy year and increased our audience with community events such as:
- 3.3. Inspire & Sew bunting @ Brockley Max
We made our own bunting for our children’s library, embroidering the words of Gandhi “Be the change you want to see in the world”. We displayed all our sewing-related library stock to inspire people to do more sewing themselves.
- 3.4. Summer Reading Challenge 2019
We organised three well-attended workshops inspired by the “Space” theme suggested by the Reading Agency. Our library was amongst the three best-performing in the borough, with an increased number of joiners and finishers.



3.5. Black History Month 2019

We celebrated BHM by inviting families to explore the moves of African dance and music with the help of the Alanouwaly Salifou Sylla Foundation. Barbadian author Gillian Rowe read from her book “But Johnny Didn’t Hear”, organised with Read for Life Barbados.

3.6. Plastic Free Christmas 2019

We organised a series of workshops to help our community to avoid the use of plastic and encourage a reuse and recycle attitude. Themes included: wool pom-pom making, make your own Christmas crackers, cookie decoration and more. We invited The Rock Choir to help us, collecting donations for the Trussel Trust Food bank few days before closing for the holidays. We raised £72 and several bags of food.

3.7. LGBTQ 2020

Author Gemma Merino was a guest at our library introducing her book “The Crocodile Who Didn’t Like Water” to a large audience of children and parents.

Regular events 2019 – 2020

3.8. All our regular weekly and monthly events continued until March 2020. Here is the list:

Weekly:

Under 5 – every Thursday – crafts club for under 5s

Baby Bounce –every Friday – for babies under 2 years

Code Club - Every Saturday – a local group of young coders, boys and girls aged 9 to 12 years

Monthly:

Crofton Park Book club - every last Tuesday

Crofton Park History Group - every first Saturday of the month

ESOL learners and Digital Inclusion classes – delivered on a weekly basis at Crofton Park by Aurelie Ramgoolam with an excellent rate of success.

March 2020 – beginning of the pandemic

- 3.9. The library closed on 16 March 2020 as we wanted to protect our volunteers. Sadly, we were due to re-open our café with a new management at that time, but pandemic has ended that possibility for now.
- 3.10. During those months our staff were furloughed but we kept in touch with all our volunteers on Zoom or via telephone. Our book club continued meeting on Zoom from March 2020, and returned to the library to meet in person for the first time again on Thursday 26th August 2021.

Refurbishment and re-branding of Crofton Park Community Library

- 3.11. We used this forced downtime to rethink our way of operating and improve our library. In September 2020 we parted with Crofton Books, the second-hand bookshop which was on our premises. We decided to eliminate the “re-use and recycle” from our name and communicate that we are no longer a reuse centre so we will be no longer accepting any kind of recycling or any donations of books or computers.
- 3.12. The library underwent a full refurbishment in the last months of 2020. We laid new carpet and lino. The walls have been repainted and the beautiful windows of our building have been strengthened and repainted.



- 3.13. We have re-organised the space and added more ethernet ports and sockets. We have purchased new computers and re-organised the internet area at the library. We have purchased new single table desks for social distancing.



- 3.14. We re-opened as a Click & Collect service on 15 April 2021 and then opened our doors and allowed browsing from 1 June 2021.
- 3.15. In March 2021 we partnered with the community-focused Make Mee Studio sewing workshop, who are now based at the library in the new space we have created, the Carnegie room. (www.makemeestudio.co.uk)
- 3.16. We also created and launched our new website which will allow us to communicate better with our audience/community.
- 3.17. Crofton Park Community Library also operated as a Census centre between March and June 2021. Aurelie Ramgoolam provided this service, helping people in our community completing their questionnaire.
- 3.18. Social Media
Throughout these difficult times we have kept our social media active and grown our audience. Our new website and our mailing list campaign will complete our communication strategy for this year. Our weekly “Word of the Week” which started in June 2018 is going very well and is a very good conversational starting point on our socials.

| Platform | Followers March 2019 | Followers August 2021 |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Facebook | 651 | 1244 |
| Twitter | 1772 | 2209 |
| Instagram | 505 | 1237 |
| TikTok | - | 304 |

4. Grove Park Community Library

- 4.1. Grove Park Community Library closed its doors to the public on 23 March 2020 due to COVID. The building re-opened for a ‘click and collect’ service for two hours each Monday morning (except bank holidays) on 14 April 2021.

- 4.2. The Library had a five year electrical test done. Electric works were completed. At the same time four additional ports were added to the main library area for computer use in the future.
- 4.3. Carpets have been replaced in main areas.
Painting is currently in progress in main areas.
- 4.4. The Children's library is being put back together, ensuring social distancing is able to take place when in use.
- 4.5. Lewisham Library staff have been supportive and helpful when called upon for assistance, and regular book deliveries and collections restarted.

5. Forest Hill Community Library

- 5.1. The closure of the library due to periods of lockdown was a large blow to many parts of the local community and really highlighted the need for the service. The periods of click-and-collect were well received but as ever it was those in most need who suffered the most as the library was unable to provide computer use during this time.
- 5.2. As a seven-day service, it is often difficult to schedule work at Forest Hill Library, so the lockdown offered an opportunity to carry out some remedial work, update the fire alarm system and, along with a team of local volunteers, transform the rear garden, a work that is very much in progress and will be an ongoing outdoor project for local volunteers interested in sustainable community gardening.
- 5.3. The library has been open four days a week since June, and will extend opening hours gradually through September, bringing back full service in due course.
We are expecting a challenging year ahead, as many volunteers are understandably hesitant about returning to an environment that is open to all and sharing resources. Staffing a week-around service might be a challenge at a time when some users have more need than ever.

6. Manor House Community Library

- 6.1. Manor House was lucky enough to be very useful in lockdown, turning over its community rooms to teams of midwives to run much-needed face-to-face appointments seven days a week. Expectant and new mothers were able to get support at a time when many of the traditional support networks, such as NCT groups and even family members, were kept at a distance due to the lockdown rules. Their need for the space has slowly diminished as hospitals, doctor's practices and healthcare centres have slowly opened up, but they still use two rooms in the library on weekdays. The lower ground floor of Manor House was also in use with Ofsted registered childcare facilities taking care of the pre-school children of key workers.
- 6.2. The library itself went regularly in and out of lockdown as the rules dictated, in order to offer a click and collect service. During this time the library managed to reach many members of the public they had never seen before, and served regular users that were very happy to see the staff. For many visitors, it was their first journey outside of the house for weeks or months. The library undertook a full inventory of stock during the

down-time and created a new BAME section within the catalogue.

- 6.3. As services come out of lockdown and resume a more recognisable service and timetable, the venue is becoming a Library of Sanctuary, as part of the Lewisham Borough of Sanctuary status. The library is located next to Pentland House and so is experiencing an increased demand for services to help new arrivals, from dual language books and study space to computer use.

7. Sydenham Community Library

- 7.1. V22 took over the running of Sydenham library just a few months before the first lockdown, so this has been a particularly tricky introduction to the community. Much of the early work was spent making renovations and trying to stop the tide of water that was rising from the basement and dripping in from various points in the roof. V22 also reconfigured some of the downstairs space to create a new community room, and have installed new computers and management software that allows better time controls and monitoring systems.
- 7.2. After a successful application for funding to The National Lottery, V22 has been able to introduce an advocacy service in the library, and installed a new full-time manager. Sydenham was identified by Community Connections Lewisham as an area with a gap in advocacy services and so V22 are delighted to be able to bring that additional service to the community.
- 7.3. The click and collect service at Sydenham had limited traction and service users very much missed the opportunity to browse, especially in the children's library. In June the library moved from click and collect to a fuller service, and are now operating three days a week, but look to make that five days in September, with the ambitious aim to bring a six day service to Sydenham by 2022.

8. New Cross Community Library (New Cross Learning)

- 8.1. New Cross closed to the public on 11 March 2020, 12 days before the government declared a national lockdown, but at the time taking heed with what was happening in Ireland and Denmark re COVID restrictions. The library has remained closed to the public since.
- 8.2. In January 2021, the Credit Union, with whom we have a partnership, opened their doors to conduct business in a refurbished section of the library. In future times, this will allow their business to be self-contained and private. We charge them rent and costs for utilities. This is a great partnership as our mission statements both reflect reaching out to help local people.
- 8.3. We have a similar relationship with the New Cross Gate Trust who has hired the space for various courses they have run during this period, when the weather is not amenable to lessons in the open. This has also been space for a group meeting around mindfulness; this again uses the library when weather conditions require more coverage than Besson Street can offer.
- 8.4. Our main objective this year has been to make the place as safe as possible for our volunteer workforce, as well as customers contracting and spreading the disease. This

has taken rather longer than we first thought as getting work people in to make adjustments to the ventilation system along with the building of separate cubicles around the computers, has been difficult. In fact, the cubicles are still not finished and could prevent the proposal being put forward in the next paragraph from taking place.

- 8.5. We are now in a position to look forward to opening our doors to the public on Tuesday 14 September 2021. At first, we will offer reduced times, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursdays and Saturdays, from 10 am – 2 pm, with a view to extending those times to 10 am – 5 pm after (October) half term.
- 8.6. At present we are working with the library service by stocktaking and increasing shelf space for the new books we have waiting for us.
- 8.7. For the near future, we are looking into purchasing a hybrid camera system that can provide external Zoom, or equivalent, meetings and training to take place from the library.

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

- 9.1. The Library remained open between Spring and Autumn 2020 lockdowns running a limited service to the public as permitted by then current Coronavirus regulations.
- 9.2. Started running Public Space Management Course with first cohort of eight students in October/November 2020 and second cohort in December 2020/January 2021
- 9.3. We lost several volunteers who remained shielding after Lockdown 1, however we have had 18 new volunteers from the local community join our team bringing with them fresh ideas for new services
- 9.4. One of our new volunteers, a former Early Years and primary school teacher, started a new support group for mothers with babies under one-year-old as this group has had few opportunities since COVID restrictions have been in place for social interaction and can be quite isolated. *“Clubs are few and far between at the moment – my baby and I are looking forward to it as we’ve had nowhere to socialise with other babies!”*
- 9.5. Other new volunteers have joined our team as part of our Doorstep Chat volunteers who visit isolated people for socially distanced doorstep chats. Social isolation and loneliness can be more harmful to health than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. We have broadened the geographical reach of our advertising to recruit volunteers with specific skills and experience, e.g. working as befrienders to older, isolated people who may be shielding
- 9.6. Our Online Support Service has been invaluable during these difficult months when other advice services have not been operating. Our service has also helped people to access benefits, etc. to which they are entitled. One desperate customer who came to the Library when our front doors were locked was a victim of domestic violence who urgently needed photocopying done to support her case. Another needed internet and PC access urgently as his family had no access to money until he had completed online forms for Universal Credit. These people, and others, would otherwise have fallen through the net with no other access to resources.

“I have found the [Online Support] Service very useful – Dave has been a lifesaver indeed, he has got me through it” Service user, September 2020

“Many thanks to you and all the volunteers who are keeping this amazing community resource going. You are truly amazing!” Service user, October 2020

- 9.7. During March and April 2020, we developed our online offer to help try to meet the needs of those who could not otherwise access services. These new services included twice weekly online storytelling for young children.
- 9.8. Maintained ESOL with social distancing, rigorous cleaning, restricted numbers and use of face shields.
- 9.9. Click and Collect and book bundles to facilitate minimal contact loans, COVID-secure home delivery of books to vulnerable customers.
- 9.10. Essential, time-limited PC use for benefits, job search, job applications, CVs, etc with rigorous cleaning of PCs between customers.
- 9.11. Started *Doorstep Chat service* (socially distanced) for isolated local people either self-referred or referred by Social Services, etc.
- 9.12. New Baby Book Group for mothers of babies under 1 year *“The last few months have been difficult with no place to take my baby where they can see other babies”*
- 9.13. Unlike most other libraries and many community centres in our borough, since early July 2020 we have been able to keep our doors open to the public on at least two days a week. This still allows our volunteers time to do the admin-type work of books being quarantined for 72 hours behind the scenes. Our service users have been very pleased with this access to services which also includes essential PC use (for benefits, job search, job applications, CVs, etc. a support service for those who need to get online to access essential services but are digitally excluded; Click and Collect book loan service; ESOL classes (with social distancing and face shields in use as well as restricted numbers).
- 9.14. Service users have expressed their gratitude for the services which we have kept running and new services started and there is demand for all services
- 9.15. It’s been challenging preparing the Library for re-opening in a COVID-secure way, including the additional expenditure this has entailed. Changing Government guidelines have meant that we constantly have to keep up to adhere to regulations.
- 9.16. The purpose of our Big Lottery grant was to help us become more financially self-sufficient by running events for the community which we are not able to do in the same way for the foreseeable future. This has however allowed us to be creative about how we can meet the changing needs of our community under COVID. Some of our work has been taken online.
- 9.17. Our Public Space Management Course has started running in a COVID-safe way with many sessions being run online. On track for getting course accredited – will then be able to charge for the course.
- 9.18. We have continued to support local artists by offering access to selling opportunities at our premises where possible, although this has had to be scaled back from our

previous offer and activity. We have also sign-posted artists to available grants, etc.

- 9.19. When circumstances permit, we look forward to re-introducing money-generating events which will also lift the spirits of our community. This has started slowly with themed monthly Makers Markets since July 2021
- 9.20. We are hugely grateful for the support of our growing group of volunteers without whom we could not run our services.