

Libraries

Co-location of Library Services into Foundry East Renfrewshire Council

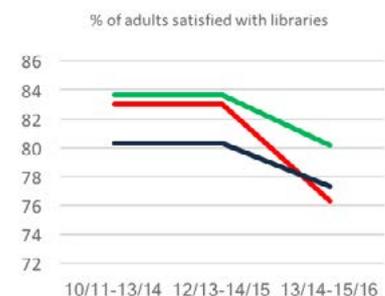
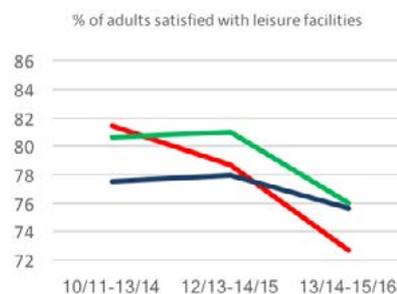
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A combination of relatively high costs and the need for new facilities across a range of services provided the incentive to create a multi-purpose facility. A state of the art venue bringing together libraries, sports, and business support services was created, pooling budgets to deliver improved service quality and increasing the use of services.

Background

Satisfaction rates for library services in East Renfrewshire presented below is based on national data from the Scottish Household Survey. However more local data is presenting a slightly different satisfaction rate consistently in the high 90's.



An assessment of East Renfrewshire's libraries, sports, and business support services found that many of them required new and improved locations and facilities. This provided an opportunity to explore the creation of multi-use facilities for the whole community which would pool budgets for sports, libraries and business centre services to deliver better value for money.

Specific objectives included:

- To make it a multi-purpose facility that complements existing public services and delivers multiple benefits to the town centre
- To introduce a range of employability and business support partners to provide a focused service for clients
- To stimulate investment in the privately-owned shopping parade
- To complete the ambitious physical transformation of the town centre, delivering a high-quality building to create a strong sense of place.

In January 2015, the Foundry (originally Barrhead Sport Centre) opened, bringing together leisure facilities, a state-of-the-art library, cutting-edge technology, help for people seeking employment and access to business development services all in one building.

Key Activities

Resourcing

Individual budgets for a new library and business centre were pooled with the existing sports budget to create the desired multi-use facility for the whole community.

Workforce and Culture

An external consultant facilitated a number of 'Brainjuice' creativity workshops to encourage different services to come together and collaborate (as they would need to when the new facility opened). Representatives from across the council participated in this process, which has helped them to create a calendar of events for the facility

One single front-of-house team was established to support customers no matter the nature of the transaction. They received training to ensure they are multi-skilled in cross-selling and supporting library, sports and other customers.

Service Facilities Upgrade

A two-storey extension was built on the front of the existing sports centre. This extension now houses the library and employability and business services.

The existing sports facilities were refurbished: the main games hall and changing areas were upgraded; the former stage area was enclosed to create an additional space; and new fitness equipment was installed.

Barrhead Library has moved from a temporary location to the Foundry, creating a cutting-edge library and learning space for the community.

A single reception area which serves all services in The Foundry was created. It also contains kiosks to encourage customers to use self-service for many operations such as book borrowing and gym entry.

The Foundry frontage is attractive and impressive and has been enhanced with the addition of coloured blinds.

Public wifi was installed throughout the facility and the libraries public access network also accommodates gym equipment which from gym users can access the internet while exercising.

Benefits and Impact

Increase in use

Co-locating the services has resulted in a significant increase in library use. In the first full financial year of operation, The Foundry saw over 300,000 visits in total. Library visits numbered 184,000—an increase of 136% on library visits in the previous year.

The Foundry is able to cross-sell services to customers with a variety of sports, art, learning opportunities and employment support alongside the library services.

Workforce up-skilling

Front-of-house customer assistants had significant training to develop their skills and confidence across all elements of the multi-purpose service.

Streamlining of budgets/management structures

The delivery of The Foundry was a collaborative effort between environment and education with budgets aligned and officers working across departments delivering services. It is now managed by the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust.

Improved service quality

The facility has rejuvenated the Barrhead Sports Centre and revolutionised the way a range of services are delivered to local residents. Members of the Foundry are given access to high quality flexible working spaces, high speed wifi, tea and coffee making facilities (if using the Business Zone), meeting rooms, desk space and invaluable opportunities to network and collaborate with other professionals in the East Renfrewshire area.

Strengthened partnership working

The library services are part of a unique facility which involves a range of partners working collaboratively. The other organisations involved include Business Gateway, Skills Development Scotland, Chamber of Commerce, Citizens Advice Bureau and Voluntary Action East Renfrewshire.

Learning

Lessons learned

Of all the various elements of the project, the most challenging was the creation of the front-of-house team. The creation of these new posts required the deletion of other posts and the amount of notice that had to be given to staff delayed the whole process. By the time the team was in place, the time for training was much reduced. This meant that training on systems and procedures had to be done on a more ad-hoc basis instead of being properly planned and timetabled as the opening of The Foundry could not be delayed. The best advice would be to discuss with HR the

implications and requirements as early as possible.

In terms of the physical aspect of the building, the lessons learned surround the relationship with the architects. The south-facing building was designed with a glass frontage with little to no filtering, resulting in excessive glare and heat. This has since been alleviated with the introduction of blinds but that was 18 months after the building opened.

What worked well

The willingness and commitment from all the services involved to work together and make it a success.

The front-of-house team, now that it is up to speed, is working very effectively. The self-service kiosks for both libraries and sports are well used which helps to relieve the strain on the reception.

Additional Information

<https://www.ercultureandleisure.org/foundry-library>