

Libraries

Shared Library and Leisure Facilities

Highland Council

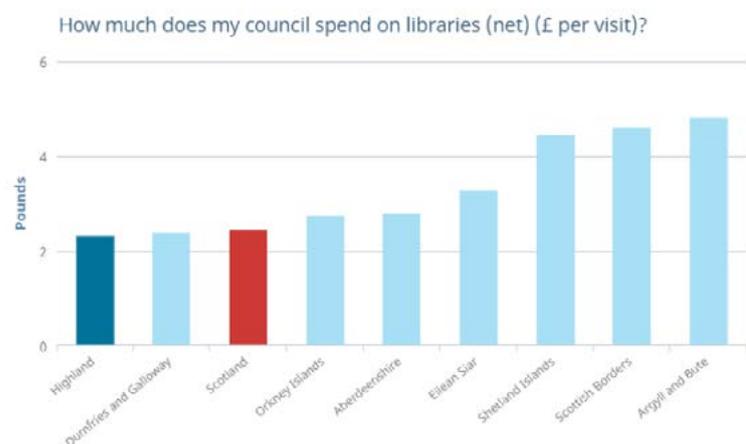
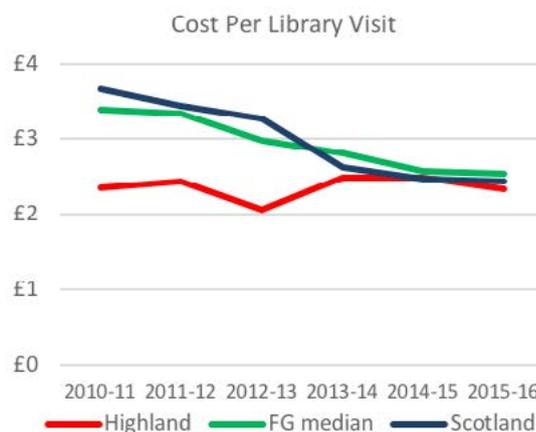
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High Life Highland's culture and leisure trust have integrated some of their library and leisure facilities. The aim of the shared facilities was to realise savings without closing libraries and at the same time enhance the customers experience. The three integrated facilities have seen visitor numbers go up and leisure memberships increase year by year while costs for library visits remain the lowest in their family group.

Background

Historically, Highland reported low Library costs compared to Scotland and the Family Group. However, in recent years, this gap has disappeared due to rapid cost reductions across Scotland, while Highland has observed small but steady increases in costs. The Council still has the lowest cost in its family group, according to LGBF data, and is still below the average cost per visit across Scotland, which is £2.45, however the gap has significantly diminished.



The majority of libraries in Highland are owned by the council and are located in rural locations. Since the libraries were already single manned with part time opening hours there was limited scope to close libraries to realise savings. To create efficiencies in service performance and customer experience High Life Highland decided to review the space within its facilities and look at incorporating other services. The integration of sport centres and libraries offered an opportunity to increase physical as well as digital footfall while promoting multiple services.

Key Activities

There is currently three integrated library and leisure facilities in Highland. The Wick campus which is an incorporate new high school with community facilities, the Aviemore Community Complex which is a new built primary school with leisure and libraries and Averon Leisure Centre in Alness.

Key activities of the integration include:

- HLH went out to tender and tasked designers with creating an integrated reception area so that customers can come to one point for both leisure and library enquiries.
- HLH worked with staff and did community consultations to prepare for the integration of staffing.
- The creation of a new role required a new job specification and equal opportunities details to be created. Traditional staff roles were library assistants and leisure assistants. In consultation with staff, HR and unions developed customer service assistant posts for both sides of the service. Manager posts were redesigned to become leisure supervisors, however prior library managers are now looking at professional services including how to increase footfall etc.
- Existing staff transferred to these posts and leisure assistants went up a grade to the library assistants grade.
- Training has been a large part of the integration to make staff comfortable within the new roles.
- Training have included workshops and one-to-ones to address staff concerns. Common concerns include lack of interests in books and reading and how can I promote the services. In terms of library assistance is que management when 100 people arrive at once.
- Looked at things like BookBug, reader development training, digital training of the library app, floorwalking and customer care training.

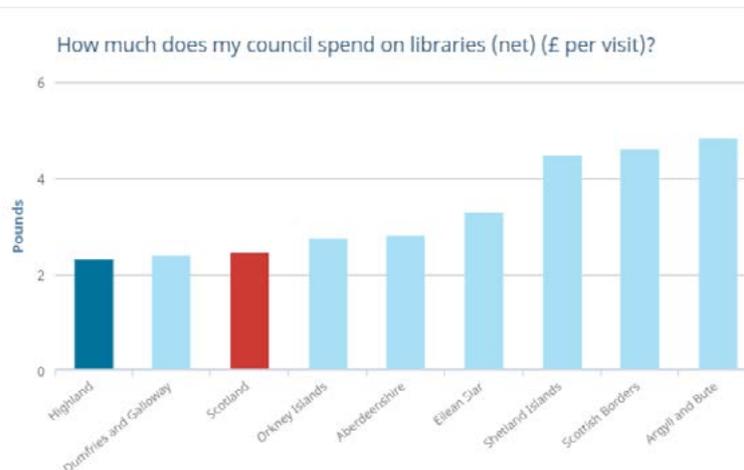
Customer visits and leisure membership income at Aviemore Community Complex have increased year upon year. Open hours have also increased from 18 hours a week to 82.5 hours a week including late night, early mornings and Sunday open hours.

Impact - Aviemore Community Complex Example

| Aviemore | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
|---------------------------|---------|----------|----------|----------|
| Visits | 21,303 | 29,705 | 30,290 | 32,635 |
| Leisure Membership Income | £43,603 | £113,531 | £138,164 | £151,681 |

Across Highlife Highland there has been a 19% increase in visits to libraries including both online and physical visits. There has also been a shift to a joint up approach to events including a Jedi training camp with both cultural and physical aspects. This has resulted in a 31% increase in attendance at events from the previous year.

Highlife Highland has also seen an increase in donations from visitors and library visits remain the lowest in their family group.



Learning

The integration of sport and library services is still at early stages and it takes time to fully integrate services. The most established service is in Aviemore which has been going for 5 years and over time both staff and customers have become comfortable with the shared facilities.

High Life Highland has learned it is best to move as quickly as possible when implementing this kind of approach, especially so when new facilities are being built. For example, the campus in Wick implemented the approach to joining up services from the very start of a facility being operational, so at an earlier stage than in Aviemore where they made changes to an existing facility.

High Life Highland has also ensured that designing from a customer perspective is a key aspect in allowing this kind of change to reach its potential success.

Working alongside staff members that work in the facilities has also been a key process in allowing the transition to working jointly and to move smoothly. It has also helped all involved understand how the service will operate.