

## Libraries

# Raising Attainment for Children and Families Inverclyde Council

## Contact for Enquiries

Alana Ward  
Inverclyde Libraries Manager

Geraldine Bergin  
Inverclyde Libraries Team Leader

Francesca Brennan, Katharine  
Muvenny  
Young Peoples Services Librarians

Inverclyde Council ran library-focused projects for children and families in partnership with several organisations, including schools, children's centres, third sector groups, and arts organisation with the aim of increasing library membership and regular usage.

## Background

Inverclyde Council is aware of the important role that libraries have to play in family learning. The council was keen to show children and families how a rounded approach using both formal education and library services would be beneficial. It was eager to investigate methods for increasing the number of children and their families accessing library services.

It aimed to make the library experience as meaningful as possible in terms of impact on raising attainment. Additionally, the council was also focused on ways to increase the number of children accessing library services and to show the service to children and families in a really positive and fun light. It also aimed to reach children and families where it best suited them through an extensive outreach programme.

## Key Activities

### Every Child a Library Member (ECALM) partnership projects

Previous ECALM projects, funded by Scottish Library and Information Council, brought benefits to the libraries, which encouraged the council to undertake similar projects. The council was also keen to learn from the original projects, particularly by addressing barriers to library usage that the projects identified.

Partnership projects that were linked to ECALM were delivered. These projects included membership drives at nurseries aimed at children aged 3-4 years and their families, reciprocal visits between nurseries and libraries, and meet the librarian sessions at nurseries. The ECALM work used Test for Change methodology so that the approach was honed to work more intensively in partnership with one parent and toddler group attached to a nursery and their Family Support Worker.

## Literacy Lunches

Inverclyde Council developed a pop-up library service at two outreach points over summer 2016 as part of the Attainment Challenge. Libraries worked in partnership with early years staff, other council departments and third sector groups to provide a literacy-based project for families in two Inverclyde areas over the lengthy summer holiday period. The library was very popular at the Literacy Lunch clubs and reached families where they needed and desired a service but no library was within the geographical area.

## Digital learning service: Appiness

North Ayrshire Council began Appiness, a project that supports families to use educational and age-appropriate apps. Evidence from the council showed that this was a beneficial project. Inverclyde Council now uses North Ayrshire's best practice to deliver Appiness sessions with parent and toddler groups at a family centre. This family centre was chosen because the council had previously partnered with them on the Literacy Lunch programme; working with them again has helped to build on existing relations and partnerships.

## Bookbug Borrowers Club

Bookbug Borrowers Club is a partnership project that is outreach based, with a view to bringing more families into libraries. This project was about developing the existing early years audience that already use the libraries. The council was aware that high numbers of families were accessing library services every week but book borrowing was still at a low level. To encourage this audience to borrow books frequently, the Bookbug Borrowers Club was introduced. Borrowing is made easier for the families that use the libraries and attend Bookbug sessions. Families join the Bookbug Borrowers Club and have a bag of books, chosen with the aid of a preference sheet completed at the point of joining, that is ready for taking home at the end of each Bookbug Session they attend.

## Primary 1 Gifting

For a number of years Inverclyde Council has worked closely with all primary schools in Inverclyde to ensure that almost all Bookbug P1 Family Packs are gifted through the library service at dedicated P1 parties. At these events extra-special children also receive their library cards, if they do not already have them, and many family members attend, which links home, school and library together. This has helped to reach children at the start of primary education, which is an optimum time as children will be learning to read. Having family members present at the sessions enables parents to see children's enthusiasm for reading and libraries.

## Reading for Pleasure

The Reading for Pleasure project was undertaken as a response to the call to raise attainment within Inverclyde. The project has taken place as part of the Attainment Challenge and has investigated how libraries and schools can work together to bridge the attainment gap in literacy. This was a pilot project with one school and involved the Attainment Challenge Coaching and Modelling Officer to ensure that the project can be rolled out with other schools.

## Booked! Inverclyde's first book festival

Inverclyde Council has been an outreach partner with the Edinburgh International Book Festival (EIBF) for a number of years, bringing exciting authors to libraries and inviting primary and secondary schools to attend. In 2016, the partnership was more ambitious with the libraries, the Beacon theatre and EIBF developing Inverclyde's first book festival. Over 1,200 people attended events during the two-day festival and every primary and secondary school had at least one class taking part in author sessions and a wide range of creative activities.

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## Benefits and Impact

The partnership projects have led to an increase in library members and library reach outside of branch libraries. Projects such as Booked! took the library service to a large and engaged audience over a short period of time. A new practice that emerged was developing the traditional author session approach to make it a fully-rounded experience, with, for example, linked literacy activities.

The Bookbug Borrowers Club saw an increase in library issues linked to Bookbug Sessions.

With P1 visits, the original goal was for as many children as possible to receive their Bookbug P1 packs through the library service. The aim is now for all Inverclyde children to receive these packs through a library visit. Additional aims are for families to participate instead of just through the school. A new practice that has emerged from this is that all class visits to libraries are now linked to library membership – schools and libraries work together to sign up children in advance of their visits.

The Literacy Lunch project developed more partnerships than originally anticipated, and from these have grown new pieces of work. It revealed to staff and partners how valued literacy work was by vulnerable families and how eager they were to participate in storytimes, provided they took place in locations that were suitable for them.

Using methodology inspired by the Early Years Collaborative use

of Tests for Change, staff involved became much more reflective in relation to their working practices, always asking 'so what?' when statistics were collected or projects were planned. This has led to more awareness of need to measure impact and sustainability of projects.

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## Learning

Through the projects, the Council learned to allow as much lead-time as possible and to re-run previously successful projects in future cycles instead of starting again on entirely new projects. They have also learned to be realistic when making use of available resources.

Certain projects showed that further work was needed to turn library members into library users. Certain projects have been tweaked to achieve this, for example working with smaller groups in further phases of ECALM project to ensure reciprocal visits took place.

Library staff meeting families outside of the library, in locations that suited the families, helped to increase wider engagement. Library staff also found that speaking to families helped them to break down barriers to library usage. Freebies and Bookbug bags also encouraged families to use library services more frequently.

Administration work was successful at getting lots of letters, posters, and promotional flyers prepared for spreading the library message and these can be adapted and reused in the future.

While Inverclyde Council was happy with the overall success of the projects, it would look to make a few changes next time it runs the initiative. It intends to start planning discussions at an earlier stage and use resources and expertise from their partners. It will look at work taking place over the annual cycle to assess possibilities for development and will try to keep talking to members of the public as often as possible.

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## Additional Information

A toolkit has been developed to support other library services to run the Bookbug Borrowers Club, and certain areas are now using it.