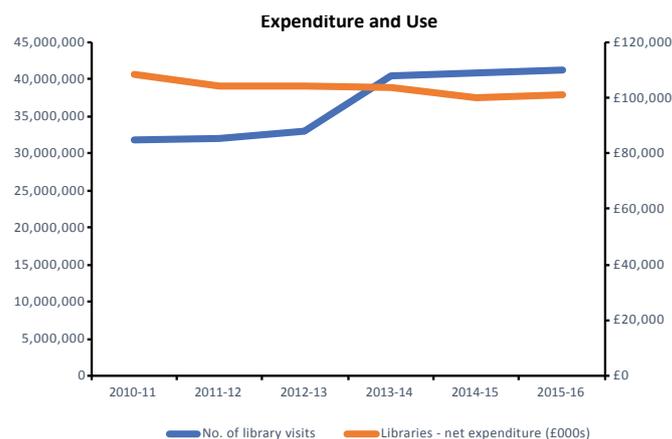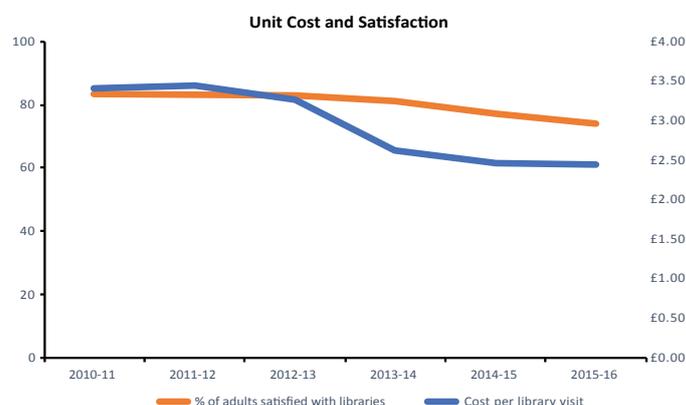# Libraries Briefing 2017

Culture and leisure services, including libraries, play an important role in the quality of life in local communities. In addition to the social and economic benefits delivered, the impact they have on promoting better health and wellbeing of the population and in reducing demand on other core services is well documented.

They can also connect well with communities that more traditional and regulated services often struggle to reach. This unique relationship provides real potential to achieve impact for people in the greatest need.
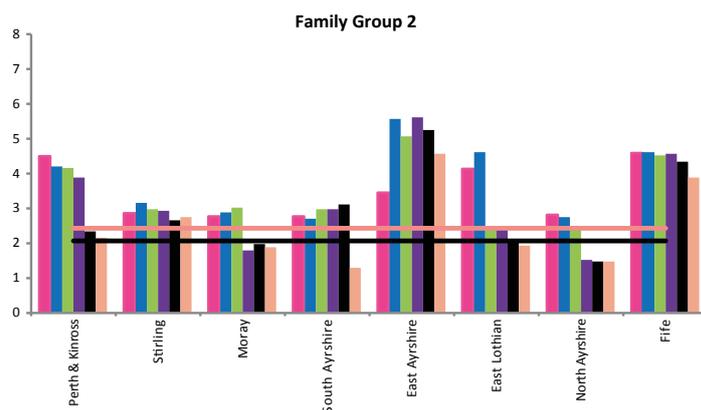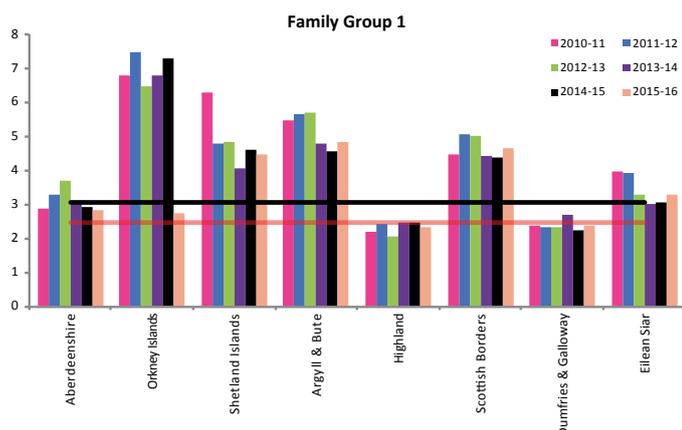
However, given there is little in the way of statutory protection for culture and leisure spending, library services face a particularly challenging financial context across the coming period. There has been a year-on-year reduction in cost per visit since 2010/11. There has been a 33.2% reduction in unit costs since 2010/11, reducing from £3.66 to £2.44 in 2015/16 for the average cost per visit.
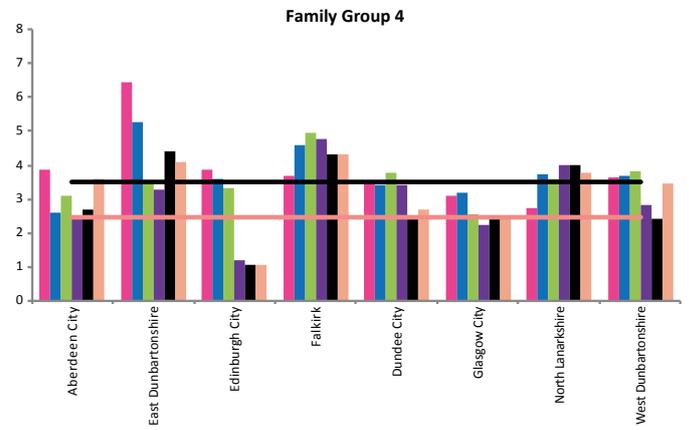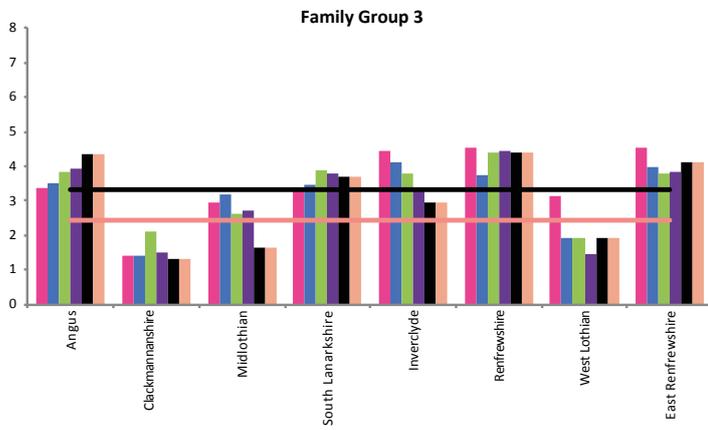
While there is significant variation in both cost and satisfaction trends across councils, there are no systematic effects of deprivation, sparsity or council size. However, work within family groups has identified the following factors as important in understanding the variation between authorities:

- Local political and strategic priority given to the role of culture and leisure in supporting improvement in wider outcomes, e.g. health and wellbeing, educational outcomes, tackling inequality, economic development, community empowerment, etc.
- Scale of provision and level of service (e.g. opening hours)
- Digital channel shift
- Service delivery model and level of in house and trust delivery
- Staffing composition, level and roles
- Level of volunteering, community involvement and asset transfer
- Income generation capacity
- Asset management and co-location/multi-use premises

Unit Cost and Satisfaction

— % of adults satisfied with libraries — Cost per library visit

Expenditure and Use

— No. of library visits — Libraries - net expenditure (£000s)

Family Groups: Cost per Visit

Family Group 1

■ 2010-11 ■ 2011-12 ■ 2012-13 ■ 2013-14 ■ 2014-15 ■ 2015-16

Aberdeenshire, Orkney Islands, Shetland Islands, Argyll & Bute, Highland, Scottish Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar

Family Group 2

Perth & Kinross, Stirling, Moray, South Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, East Lothian, North Ayrshire, Fife

Family Group 3

Family Group 4

Variation in Satisfaction Rates

RANGE = 59.33 - 95.67

% of adults satisfied with libraries

■ 2010-14   ■ 2012-15   ■ 2013-16   ▬ Scotland Average for 15-16
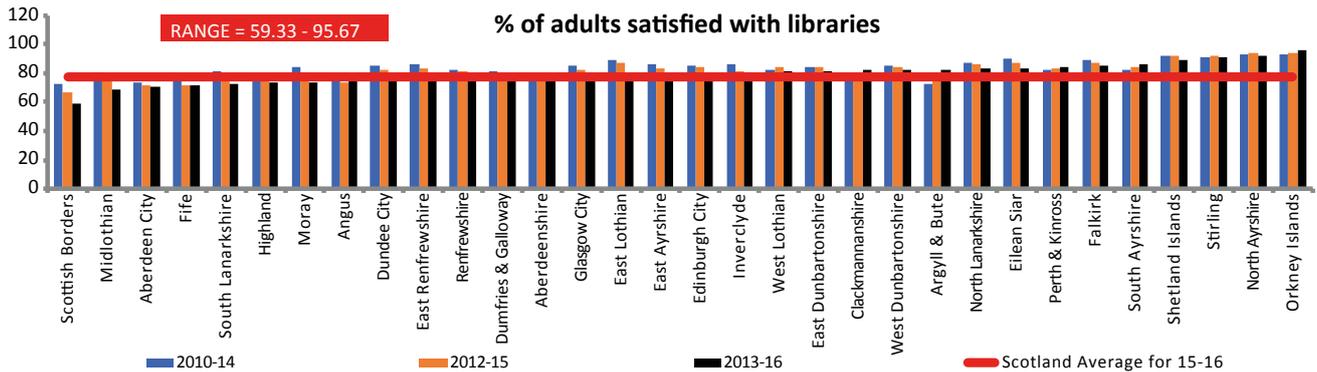
Sharing Practice—August 2016 Benchmarking Event

Innovative approaches and the introduction of digital services and projects are key to providing a library service that is fit for purpose in 2017. There has been a shift from traditional book lending to provision of media and digital support, **digital inclusion and online services** including e-books and heritage information.

Achieving a balance between reducing inequalities by **ensuring access for harder to reach customers** and attracting new customers and young people to the service with innovative and creative programmes can be challenging.

Understanding how to market their range of services is a key focus for library services. Approaches include drawing on marketing techniques used in other sectors (e.g. supermarkets); making use of corporate marketing teams; emphasising the role of staff in getting the message out; and developing focussed campaigns on particular themes, areas and people. It was generally agreed that social media seems to be the most cost-effective way to design targeted marketing campaigns to different types of customers.

There is concern around the implementation timescale for **Universal Credit** and the assumptions around skills and knowledge of staff. There will be important learning from East Lothian (early adopters of Universal Credit now 2-3 years down the line) and Midlothian (one year down the line).

Workforce and Volunteering

As one of the biggest expenses for libraries, there has been significant focus on the redesign of the library workforce. The shift to more co-located services and multi-function buildings has seen movement from qualified librarians to multi-skilled staff that work across customer services, leisure and culture in addition to libraries. Additionally, considerable focus has been placed on approaches to volunteering, especially around recruiting, training and sustaining volunteers. Libraries services have always worked with volunteers to deliver added value services. However, there is some concern that the continued emphasis on delivering savings will have an impact (and ultimately reduce) paid roles and impact upon terms and conditions. Attempts to quantify the value of volunteers moves the conversation towards replacing paid staff and often underestimate the costs of sourcing, hiring, sustaining, and training volunteers. There is however a recognition of the need to balance the moral and social obligation to both communities and professionals, and agreement that technology to run an unstaffed library is unaffordable for many and volunteers offer a better solution than a shut library. There was some interest in the Merton Model, where volunteers have been introduced explicitly as a budget saving. In this approach, the council sat down with Unison and

staff to look at the change process and ultimately amended staff roles so that they manage volunteers, and gave the volunteers very defined job roles.

- **Dundee Opportunities project** - Dundee accessed initial PLIF funding to appoint a volunteer co-ordinator to manage, engage and task volunteers. They opened an 'Opportunities Room' using six volunteers, who have been trained in welfare benefits, and in providing digital and health and wellbeing support. The Opportunities room is now embedded and used by other agencies such as DWP, Dundee College, Code Club, Amina, and is represented on the DCC Universal Credit group. While the funding initially came from PLIF, over the years this has been continued by DCC, Job Centre, and now Leisure and Culture Dundee. They now have 28 volunteers, providing 4059 voluntary hours, and 10,000 digital assistance sessions. They are based in the Central Library, which brings benefits as it brings volunteers together which volunteers identify as important in the social benefits it offers. Also, as it is based within the shopping centre in Dundee it is close to Job Centre improving access, but also makes it vulnerable to fluctuations in footfall caused by closure of key units in the shopping centre (e.g. BHS). Dundee have also funded a part-time clerical post to support the implementation of universal credit which is seen to be very positive. However, it is anticipated that the full roll out of universal credit on 8th November will be challenging as the forms are not released yet, and so it hasn't been possible to train people.

- **Fife** are integrating library services with customer services which has involved a different type of management and training for all, including new vocabulary so all can speak in one voice. In some areas, the closure of customer services has resulted in library staff now doing this job and offering the Tier 1 (enquiry) service which can be challenging. In time, it is likely all libraries will do some sort of Tier 1 service.

- **Fife** are also improving staff skills in filming/photography to help document the impact of the delivery/investment in various activities.

- **South Lanarkshire** libraries staff have a key role in 'selling' children's activities offers through ACE. They got buy in from libraries staff by including the libraries service within the offer. A similar approach is now being developed for older people.

- **Highland** fund a volunteer co-ordinator to look after, train and retain Macmillan volunteers. **Falkirk** also have a volunteer co-ordinator.

- **Stirling** fund a digital Inclusion officer to train/sustain volunteers. They value the additionality volunteers provide, but recognise that it's a full-time job to carry out disclosure checks, contract management, training etc.

- **North Ayrshire** have re-organised their provision reducing mobile provision and merging existing provision, but haven't reduced staff and didn't use volunteers to replace paid staff or take tasks away from paid staff due to terms/conditions.

- **South Lanarkshire** fund a dedicated children's team, with 14 dedicated staff who are core funded by Culture and Leisure. They can argue impact/benefit through literacy and Early years development benefits which helps renew investment. They are doing more and more outreach work (as well as activities in libraries) and are delegating Bookbug and other key activities. The outreach work focusses on literacy improvement and income generation via activities schools can buy into (using Attainment Fund). This includes high profile events- e.g. SLAN have written and delivered a children's panto which is cheaper for schools. Income is increasing year on year, up £30k last year, and they are looking to grow it further.

- **Inverclyde** fund three education/young people workers full time who focus on literacy. The service sits in Education which has helped to make links. They used Attainment Fund money for an outreach librarian in communities to work with families (Reading Challenge; Read, Write, Count) which frees the Young People's team to run libraries.

- **Dundee** have begun re-focussing roles when staff retire to cater for and attract younger staff.

- **Edinburgh** are implementing new staff roles to develop leadership across the service, and are also looking at providing unstaffed access after-hours.

- **West Dunbartonshire** have reduced the number of professional librarians across their services and are introducing more combined roles.

- **East Dunbartonshire** are encouraging applications from younger staff by creating more entry level roles.

- **Highland** have volunteers running their coding sessions, and they have also recruited some teenagers to assist with this.

- **Midlothian** open one of their libraries on an unstaffed basis on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons within an integrated centre, and visitors use the self-service machines to issues books. This allows the library to be open when it otherwise wouldn't be. There was also a discussion on 'open+' libraries, and their role.

Partnerships, Co-location and Integration

Co-location, integration and partnership delivery of services are key to how the library sector is evolving to manage the cost base while continuing to improve accessibility. Many authorities have moved to co-located library services, widening the customer base to those also seeking sports and leisure services as well as customer services. There is recognition that if libraries are located in the right places they will reach local communities and strengthen engagement, and the way to do this is to co-locate or deliver in partnership with other diverse services. While libraries have always worked in partnership (both with the council and with external organisations like Macmillan Cancer Support, DWP etc), these approaches are more important than ever. There is growing recognition of the need to maximise opportunities to influence decision makers in Education and HSC who have funding to improve literacy (e.g. Attainment Challenge; Pupil Equity Fund) and develop partnerships using this route, with libraries leading the delivery.

- Most agreed that while libraries have always relied on partnerships, there has been an increase in partnerships in recent years. Organisations that they currently partner with include voluntary sector, AS/Autism seat, DWP, NHS, McMillan. A key point was the challenge in joining up with other services while remaining distinct.

- **Fife** now deliver six library services which are fully integrated with customer services, with up to three more coming on board.

- **Highland** include both libraries and leisure in their new-build schools, both primary and secondary. The key benefit of co-locating is it protects multiple services. They upgraded staff which helped to resolve potential challenges with terms and conditions. Visits are up, leisure membership income is up, and they have increased opening hours from 18 hours to 82.5 hours. Highland have taken a longer-term vision, as 35 libraries were in shared facilities pre-2012. They put them where they should have been in the first place – in schools/shared facilities. In schools, signage is important to let customers /communities know they can come in. This is easier in new build and easier in smaller communities where they tend to have greater ownership. There was some resistance over security initially, but this has now dissipated. The school has access and uses the facilities for classes, it is open to parents half an hour before they pick up kids and it is open after the school is closed.

- **Highland** also introduced library services that were integrated with local leisure facilities, and this meant that the libraries were able to have longer opening hours. They have seen an increase in usage as a result from just over 20,000 to more than 30,000 in the three years at the Aviemore Community Complex.

- **Midlothian** have co-located primary, secondary, health and leisure. There were concerns around security in relation to the afterschool club and 2 nurseries on campus, but now people are seeing the services being used and feel safer. Active membership of adults is up by 200%. The onsite café means it is also possible for families to stay all day in the holidays.

- **North Lanarkshire** have a shared facility where they use space for self-service on a Tue/Wed and Sat/Sun. It is not an expensive investment, but a friendly place to be, even with no staff.

- **Clackmannanshire** developed a partnership with Education linking in to the Curriculum for Excellence focus on literacy. They were keen to extend Bookbug sessions after previous cuts meant they no longer had the staffing needed to offer it. They worked with local nurseries who come in and are the core of the session (although others can join in). This helps both the nurseries and the library, and they are now delivering 15 Bookbug sessions across the area.

- **North Ayrshire** have partnered up with drug and alcohol charities focusing on vulnerable citizens in the community. They are also partnering up with employability hubs and there are currently discussions regarding housing hub. One venue is now an integrated library, museum & employability hub, where all services are run under the same umbrella.

- **Midlothian** have partnered up with health services including a mental health project. These are run by the library but with a steering group of external stakeholders, including NHS.

- **Dundee** are making partnership working a key focus moving forward and are now actively seeking partners to work with to deliver the service.

- **Edinburgh** have integrated library services with the CLD service.

- Many councils cited Heritage Lottery funding as key for securing community buy in.

Digital Innovation

Innovative digital services and projects are key to providing a library service that is fit for purpose in 2017. Library services across Scotland are implementing a wide range of approaches.

- **East Renfrewshire** are investing in an Open Library model using Biblioteca Open Plus. They used £30k funding

from PLIF and are among the first in Scotland to pursue this option. The aim is to improve access to libraries and extend opening hours. They have made a commitment they won't change terms and conditions and have emphasised that the new technology is to improve/enhance service to customers. They used an existing library in Clarkston (council owned). The required work involves technology (to ensure doors open, lights come on, fire alarms work) and staff training and awareness raising for customers. The work is costing more than anticipated so they are currently sourcing more funding. They are learning from the implementation in Peterborough (have access to all their P&Ps). The culture of community ownership is evident there, it is used by students, social work staff, emergency services, community wardens and to date there are no issues with vandalism.

- Most agreed that digital and coding events are the way forward to engage with younger people and develop digital skills. Most libraries offer events in this area, and they experience long waiting lists. For example, **Perth & Kinross** delivered a makers base exhibition/workshop for coding/digital skills and in **Midlothian** coding events are so popular they cannot keep up with demand.

- **Aberdeenshire** also recently updated their PCs, making them much easier to use and as a result have seen an increase in use of digital services, and regularly use their twitter and Facebook accounts to promote activities. This was a challenge for the **Western Isles** due to poor broadband access.

- **Fife** provide a range of digital offers to attract library goers, for example tablet literacy sessions, a digital story teller, and an online reading group.

- **North Ayrshire** use Facebook adverts to attract customers with a budget of around £50 a month. **Midlothian** use Facebook as well and find it useful.

Community Involvement

As part of the Community Empowerment agenda, many authorities are exploring approaches to support greater community ownership/management of library services.

- **Fife** libraries service has been going through a redesign which will deliver £1.7 million savings. While some libraries have closed (51 down to 35 static libraries), they have provided communities with the chance to take over the libraries at no cost. They now have seven independent community run libraries, and hope to bring another three on board. They are independent, and can't access trust/council support. Fife's contribution was supporting costs of transition and providing refresher stock. However, a lot is needed to maintain the buildings and it will be a challenge for groups in terms of the commitment and income needed. Fife gave them each one week of professional time to help set up in whatever they needed. Some also had ex-members of staff on their committees.

- **Midlothian** have three or four community-led libraries which have been successful for several years, although one is now struggling.

- **Falkirk** restructured over 18 months to deliver 350K savings, which will see libraries transition to greater community development and community hub roles

- **North Ayrshire** changed their opening hours significantly after community consultation.

- **Perth & Kinross** deliver the Big Listen consultation. There is currently a push to reduce the property portfolio, so this needs to be part of the consultation conversation. When there were closures, the local community protested and set up a group to open Sat/Monday. This has worked well, although it is a big investment for the community – they are now looking for funding and are taking on some of the duties of traditional staff.

- **Fife** carried out consultation using 'Jump research'. 13,000 emails to the library database, 23,000 on the theatre database and they also ran a series of public focus events including focus groups with children.

- **Perth & Kinross** have carried out customer mapping to find out what their customers journey and needs are.

Tackling Inequalities

Libraries services have a critical role to play in tackling inequalities, and many are targeting efforts to engage better with vulnerable groups and promote the wide range of services offered.

- **North Ayrshire** is working hard to focus their service delivery on poor and vulnerable communities to decrease inequality. 'Digidabble' is an example of this where they target the most deprived data zones & Schools (top 20%).

- **East Ayrshire** emphasise the role of libraries is to bring together people from different backgrounds and provide a range of events that are both free or at a cost (Comic Con workshops, author nights etc) to attract different types of customers.

- **Midlothian** are working on a campaign to increase engagement by going on the Scottish Borders railway to promote services.
- **Edinburgh** have developed a 'welcome wallet' to show customers what services they provide when they join to help showcase the lesser known services they provide.
- **East Dunbartonshire** have taken steps to focus less on traditional book lending and more on provision of activities for customers.

Other Approaches

- **East Ayrshire** have developed a large exhibition space that can be used to host events or generate income. They have managed to attract big names to their author nights with 500 people attending and big exhibitions.
- **Edinburgh** are carrying out analysis of library services and after a CLD inspection are focussing on demonstrating the impact of the service. They are also looking at a providing a core offer, and carrying out asset rationalisation.
- **Vocal** spoke about their ambition to create central depositary for evidence and good practice and while this primarily would help make the case for libraries, it may also support marketing activities.
- Due to the temporary closure of a local library, **Aberdeenshire Council** purchased a book kiosk, which holds around 200 books, and borrowers use their library card to open to kiosk and select a book. They can also return books to the kiosk. They are now considering moving the kiosk it to a location where there is no library provision.
- **Highland** has donation tins within its libraries. The other rural library services recognised the importance of this, and many charge for non-core activities such as 3-D printing to generate income.

Useful Links

Presentation: Dundee Opportunities Project

Presentation: Fife Libraries A New Vision

Presentation: Highland Shared Services

Dundee Opportunities Project case study

Explore the LGBF data by service, across councils and over time using the My Local Council Tool