Communities need Museums, Libraries and Archives: delivering thorough Local Area Agreements

The museum, library and archive sector is uniquely placed to help deliver outcomes for local communities. The sector's institutions are trusted public spaces, used by people that other services often find hard to reach. Public libraries are at the heart of almost every urban and rural neighbourhood. Already, the sector is contributing to the achievement of outcomes – both in its core role and in extending its reach to further improve the quality of life for communities and neighbourhoods. Museums, libraries and archives are innovating to continually improve and form partnerships that increase the potential both of themselves and the services with whom they work.

Museums, libraries and archives are at the heart of local communities, and can be at the heart of local government's effort to deliver through Local Area Agreements. This is a major opportunity for the sector to access new funding streams and partnerships in order to further its impact. The challenge for local policy makers and communities is to make this happen.

Below, MLA outlines just some of the ways in which museums, libraries and archives are, or are planning to, deliver on outcomes that contribute to LAA blocks. In particular we explore how partnership and new resources allows the sector to deliver better and new outcomes – which is the opportunity presented by LAAs.

Children's and young people's block

Outcomes under this block support the well being of children and young people through achieving targets set for school education and lifelong learning, health and the economy. Museums, libraries and archives have a track record of delivering for young people, and building upon this will help an LAA achieve outcomes for this block.

- Research demonstrates[1] that parents and the home have the greatest impact on children's educational outcomes. Libraries have a significant role to play in supporting an enriched home learning environment not only be providing supply of free resources but also by modelling how to use them. 87 per cent of library services deliver regular early years library activity that helps parents to share books and rhymes successfully and offering support on selecting books to share with babies. Bookstart, a national programme to give free books to parents and carers, is central to this. Its value has been recognised by the Government and from September 2005 Sure Start funding means that all families with children of 8 months, 18 months and 3 years will receive free packs containing quality picture books, information and guidance on how to share books and other early language games successfully and also a personal invitation to join their local library. All English library authorities are developing

[1] EPPE Research (Effective Provision of Pre School Education)

formal partnership agreements with Primary Care Trusts to support the delivery of the programme.

- As shown by Bookstart, other funding streams can be used to help museums, libraries and archives contribute to wider outcomes. LAAs are an opportunity to develop this further. Libraries and museums have already played an important part in Sure Start local programmes. Over 200 Sure Start funded early years librarians have developed practice and led to a range of family friendly initiatives and an approach that has involved parents in the development of services.

- There is a clear role for public libraries in helping deliver LAA outcomes relating to formal educational attainment. Libraries provide access to free study support and creative reading opportunities. The People's Network enables free access to ICT, bridging the digital divide. All these contributions could be included within LAAs – whether generically or for the benefit of particular groups. Such contributions can be supported innovatively by a range of providers and funding streams appropriate to the local area and the target.

Safer and stronger communities block

To achieve success under this block, LAAs have to focus on improving the liveability of local communities, and to give local people a greater say in how their services are delivered. Libraries have a valuable contribution to making communities safer and stronger. They act as a focus for neighbourhoods, trusted resources that communities can use to improve local people's lives.

- Libraries help communities better access services and shape their delivery. Leeds Communities Online is a project managed by Leeds Library and Information Services to develop community websites for each of Leeds City Councils 33 wards. In addition to these ward-based sites, free software and web space is available for community groups and non-profit organisations in the Leeds area to develop their own websites. The project provides community information, enhanced and developed by the community, and the opportunity for local people to interact with the council on local issues that affect them and their way of life. It aims to give citizens and groups the opportunity to be more involved in local decision making, therefore contributing to social inclusion and cohesion.

- Renaissance in the Regions, investing in England's regional museums supports the aim of cultural services better meeting the needs of communities, especially those in disadvantaged areas. Renaissance, which is a funding stream that can be locally aligned in an LAA, furthers audience development amongst previously excluded and hard to reach groups.

- Libraries have demonstrated how partnerships increase their capacity to innovate and deliver for communities who might otherwise experience exclusion. Coming together to match funding provided by Advantage

West Midlands, the RDA, *BITS for All* a Black Country Libraries in Partnership consortia (including four local authorities) developed tailored ICT training packages in English and community languages to support and promote the use of ICT within library services by Asian ethnic minorities in the region, groups that were previously not making use of the opportunities provided by the People's Network. This not only helped increase learning and skills development within the Black Country but also helped citizens to become more involved in both the e-information environment and knowledge economy.

Healthier communities and older people block

Our sector is in a good position to contribute to this block, particularly in supporting older people improve their quality of life and access employment. Increasingly, our sector is engaged in partnerships with the NHS that will contribute to the improved general health of the population. Learning is at the heart of our sector and we know that keeping the mind active and engaged improves the mental health and well being of older people. Our sector has enormous potential here – not only does the sector provide access to a large number of community based venues, open to all and providing stimulating and creative activities but there are specific programmes that directly support healthy communities. Partnerships, particularly with the NHS and voluntary sector, help museums, libraries and archives do more in delivering on health agendas.

- Volunteering in a museum, library or archive helps people take an active part in their community. The Bookstart scheme in Southend is entirely run by older volunteers. Many older people are involved in developing community archives and family history activities. Such activities help older people remain connected to their communities, and there is huge potential to develop this further, linking it to reminiscence sessions and intergenerational work.

- Partnerships will help the sector deliver outcomes under this block. NHS LIFT aims to develop a new market for investment in primary care and community-based facilities and services. LIFT will deliver modern effective and well resourced primary care provision where GPs and other primary care providers deliver an extended range of services in the community, involving the local health community in developing a strategic service development plan, incorporating its local primary care service needs and relationships with, intermediate care, and local authority services. Doncaster libraries are relocating 3 branch services into the newly established LIFT centres adding to a suite of council services concerned with health and social care centred in one community location enabling onsite referral, promotion and awareness raising of health information services which are an integral part of narrowing the health inequality gap.

- Particular issues in some areas can find direct solutions in the sector's services. Northumberland Record Office has promoted use of archive services to support research by claimants for compensation for respiratory diseases contracted whilst employed by the National Coal Board.

- Cornwall's Home Library Service, through partnership working with Social Services, Women's Royal Voluntary Service and volunteers, has found an effective way of bringing library services to those otherwise unable to access them. The service helps those who are unable to get to libraries. Volunteers help users access the library service through deliveries and lifts. For some users, it can be a way to maintain some independence while others simply need someone to carry home the heavy books. The initiative demonstrates how partnership and pooling new with existing funding streams can help libraries deliver new outcomes. Cornwall Library service fund a WRVS part-time representative to organise volunteers, while Cornwall County Council Social Services paid volunteer's travelling expenses. The Library Service paid for publicity and stock supply.

Economic development and enterprise block

Alongside their obvious contribution to tourism, museums, libraries and archives support lifelong learning and this can be vital in the skills necessary for sustaining an area's economy and the community's participation in it.

- The sector's role in stimulating tourism is well known (across the south west region, an estimated 8.6 million visits are occasioned by our sector's institutions)[2]. Museums up and down the country– both in the local authority and independent sectors - are significant visitor attractions that underpin local and regional economies. Increasingly this is true of archives, as more and more people research their family history. Where an LAA is seeking to deliver outcomes under this block for an area where tourism is important, our sector has to be included.

- An increasing emphasis, for example, as part of The Northern Way, is being put on city-regions in stimulating regional economies, and many of our larger cities have regionally significant museums. Seven of the eight core cities have hub museums that receive funding as part of Renaissance in the Regions. These museums are reaching out to groups who previously would not have accessed them, and contributing to learning. The potential exists, as this funding can be aligned locally as part of an LAA, for these museums to exploit new partnerships and funding to deliver better and new outcomes – locally and regionally.

- In supporting learning, the sector can help enhance skills within a community – increasing employability and supporting business development. There are plenty of examples of how museums, libraries and archives have worked with LSCs, RDAs, further and higher education and other partners to better deliver on these agendas. Newcastle's Lifelong Learning Service runs courses in 16 libraries with funding from the LSC. It supports courses run by partners with resources and staff expertise where appropriate.

[2] *Making a Difference* SWMLAC (2004)

Museums, libraries and archives – an ability to deliver

The challenge now is put the sector at the heart of LAAs. LAAs are a chance to develop existing and new partnerships that allow the sector to do more. They can bring new funds, new partnerships and the chance to innovate. It is a significant opportunity. We already know a lot about what will make a museum, library or archive contribution a successful part of an LAA:

- Museums, libraries and archives are already delivering outcomes that come under the four blocks;
- It has been demonstrated that, for libraries in particular, partnerships increase capacity to make new connections and to access new funding streams[3], making it possible to enhance existing work and to contribute to the delivery of new outcomes – LAA is a huge opportunity to take this further;
- Existing partnerships are there to be built upon[4]; and
- The sector has a track record of innovation, which stands it in good stead.

The sector is well placed to evidence its contribution. Public Library Standards give a level of service quality that can underpin target setting and libraries' contribution to LAA outcomes, while Library Impact measures evidence the benefits communities receive as regards need. Renaissance in the Regions' commitment to audience development seeks to help museums reach a wider community and contribute to learning, and this is demonstrated by evidence. The inclusion of the Culture Block within CPA from 2006 further strengthens the place of cultural services in the delivery of local outcomes.

It may be that the policy makers leading LAAs know and understand the MLA sector, but this isn't going to the case across the board. In order to do this, we need to address the following within each area:

- **How can the sector contribute to the priorities of the LAA;**
- **What activities are already underway that will facilitate contribution;**
- **What existing partnerships can be built upon;**
- **What potential partnerships are available and how can they help delivery; and**

[3] *Extending the role of libraries* NfER/LGA (2004)

[4] For libraries, especially, partnerships are in place that will LAAs can build upon. 75% of library services have or plan to have partnerships with other public services:

- Children and young people's block – 94% of these involve education services;
- Safer and stronger communities – 17% involve the justice system;
- Healthier communities and older people – 65% involve social services, 39% NHS;
- Economic development and enterprise – 26% involve the employment services.

Extending the role of libraries NfER/LGA (2004)

- **What funding streams are on offer and how can they help delivery?**

Where those leading the development of LAAs haven't fully considered the contribution that museums, libraries and archives can make, sector professionals in the area need to act as advocates. They need to assemble the information necessary by asking the questions above, and they need to think about how best to promote the sector. In particular:

- **Who are the key people who are leading the LAA that need to be influenced; and**
- **What are the key dates between now and the LAA being implemented that you need to be aware of?**

Where to find support and advice

Whether you are a corporate officer leading the development of an LAA, or if you a are a sector professional looking to advance the contribution of your institutions and partnerships, there is a wealth of expertise that can help all LAAs benefit from museums, libraries and archives. To access this knowledge and experience:

- Contact your Regional Agency for museums, libraries and archives; and
- Visit the IDeA/DCMS Cultural Connections website

We'd also like to know about your experiences of LAAs. Please contact Paul Bristow, Regional Policy Adviser at MLA paul.bristow@mla.gov.uk