Planning and Designing Libraries for Children & Young People – the UK Experience

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What I’m going to cover

• Key principles in the process of planning, designing and equipping libraries for children and young people
• Look at a few examples from the UK
  – Centre for the Child Library, Birmingham
  – Sunshine Library, Wakefield
  – Moss Side Power House Library, Manchester
  – Idea Stores, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
  – Reading Rocket Children’s Mobile Library - Derby
  – Long Eaton & Alfreton Libraries, Derbyshire
Key Principles for Planning, Designing & Equipping Children's Libraries

• Siting, layout & design of children’s library or area an important part of library provision
• Needs of children and parents must be considered in planning and design process
• May have existing constraints to consider
• Must develop a clear vision of what you want to achieve
Key areas to consider

Planning
• What do you want to achieve
• Why do you want to achieve it
• What restrictions do you have
• What funding do you have
• What is your timescale
• Assessment of current facilities
• Draw up planning brief

Ethos
• When it is finished what are the key messages you want it to give to child users

Location
• Location within the building

Facilities and Services
• What are you going to provide
• Impact on your design and layout
Key areas to consider

**Design & Layout**
- Space
- Image
- Relationship to adult library or area
- Safety features
- Remember Child Friendliness

**Furniture**
- Safe, sturdy, good quality
- Support equality of access
- Flexibility
- Remember tastes change
- Shelving
- Stock Issues
- Other issues
Key areas to consider

**Staffing**
- What staffing will be required
- What knowledge and skills will they need
- What training will they need to ensure they are equipped effectively

**Consultation**
- Major stage in planning/design process
- Why consult
- What do you want to consult on
- Who do you want to consult with
- How are you going to do it
- What will you do with the results
Consultation

• No one way to consult - every situation different
• Think through and plan what you need
• Children can be consulted but need special consideration
• Need to build trust
• Need to show them you want to listen

• May need to go where they are
• Use tools that fit into their every day life
• Crucial they see the outcome in terms of impact
• Variety of tools can be used
• Consultation gives you powerful arguments in support of the services you provide as well as help in planning services that will be used in the future
Centre for the Child in Birmingham

• Led the way in planning, designing, equipping children’s libraries
• Ground breaking & ahead of it’s time
• Innovative and pushed back the boundaries of what could be achieved
• Is standing the test of time – others followed its lead
Centre for the Child in Birmingham

- 1991 Central Children’s Library destroyed by fire
- Took the opportunity to reassessed the role & function
- Wanted to develop & design a children's library service to meet the needs of children & young people into the 21st Century
- Ensure children of Birmingham ended up with something better
Centre for the Child

• Initial consultation programme – tell us what you want
• Ideas shaped by the big library, education and social agendas
• Partnerships created & developed
• Determination to triumph over adversity
• Concept of Centre for the Child ‘a children’s library with a whole lot more’ was born
Location

Floor plan

Conclusion

The Centre for the Child in the City will be the state of the art library and resource centre for children and young people in the 21st century. The Centre for the Child in the City offers a unique opportunity to invest in the future of Birmingham's children.

A Phoenix from the Ashes

The Central Children's Library in Birmingham was destroyed by fire in April 1991. This resulted in the total loss of its books, equipment and resources and dealt a devastating blow to the quarter of a million children and young people in the City. Out of the ashes, however, has come a unique opportunity to plan and develop a Centre for the Child in the City.

The Centre for the Child in the City will:

- Be a place in the heart of the City centre which highlights the importance of the child, which welcomes the child and which is for the child.
- Bring together a wide range of facilities and resources to meet the diverse needs of children and young people.
- Celebrate books and reading for pleasure.
- Help parents support the early reading and writing skills of their children.
- Respond to the information needs of parents and carers.
- Welcome and provide for children with disabilities.
- Enable children to be confident independent learners.
- Provide a gateway to a range of other services for children in the City and their parents and carers.

Special Features

- The parent and baby room will offer a much needed private, comfortable place in the Central Library, where parents can go to feed and change babies.
- The disability resource centre will provide resources and equipment designed to enable better access to books, information and services for children and young people with disabilities, complementing the facilities for adults on Floor 4.
- The Children's Information Bureau will provide a comprehensive information service for parents, carers, employers and organisations. Information will be available on "childcare" in the widest sense and will be a key element in the role of The Centre for the Child as an information centre for parents.

Among the many thousands of books to borrow and enjoy at home there will be:

- Stories for children of all ages in a variety of languages and in dual text.
- Talking books, giant sized books, books with large print and feelie books.
- Information books to support hobbies, interests and study for school.
- Independent learning materials in book, tape and disk forms.
- Books for teenagers.
- Magazines.
- Books and information for parents.

Equipment in The Centre for the Child will include:

- Reading machines and induction loops for children with disabilities.
- Cassette players and video facilities.
- Computer hardware and software.
- Toys and play equipment.

An Innovative Service

- Giving children the opportunity of taking part in creative and imaginative activities and events.
- Offering new and existing facilities for children, parents and carers.
- Supporting leisure, education and children.
- Providing help, advice, support, books and information for parents and carers.

With special thanks to Ray Patey for his help in providing the photographs in this brochure as his contribution to The Centre for the Child.
Centre for the Child – Further Consultation

• Extensive consultation undertaken with children & families
  – Surveys
  – Planning for real exercises
  – Methods of promotion
  – Market testing soft furnishings
  – Family consultation
Centre for the Child - Aims

- A place in the heart of the city centre which highlights the importance of the child, welcomes the child and is for the child
- Brings together a wide range of facilities & resources to meet the diverse needs of children and young people
- Celebrates books and reading
- Helps parents support the early reading & writing skills of their children
Centre for the Child - Aims

• Responds to information needs of parents and carers
• Welcomes & provides for children with disabilities
• Enables children to be confident independent learners
• Gateway to other services for children & parents
• Provides a focal point for co-operation in service provision
Centre for the Child - Facilities

- Main children’s library
- Baby & toddler area
- Beginning to Read area
- Homework & Study area
- Disability Resource area
- Teenage area
Centre for the Child - Facilities

- Multi media PC’s
- Sound & Vision system
- Meeting & activity rooms
- Corporate Display area
- Exhibition area
- Childcare Information Bureau
Centre for the Child - Facilities
Centre for the Child – A Success Story
Centre for the Child – 10 Years On

- Centre for the Child celebrated its 10th birthday in March 2005
- Still true to its aims
- Still being heavily used
- Still being visited by a wide range of colleagues
- Still ensuring that children and families in Birmingham have a positive and enjoyable library experience
- But things are changing!
New Library of Birmingham

• Since 2001 Birmingham working towards delivery of major new Central Library
• Goal to set new standards for libraries in the 21st century
• Vision is that the Library of Birmingham will give everyone the opportunity to access learning, information & cultural expression through existing and emerging technologies. Through written, print, audio, visual & interactive resources & technologies, the Library of Birmingham will link the people of Birmingham to the world. It will bring the world to Birmingham
New Library of Birmingham

- Learning Centre
- Community Resource
- Centre for Literature
- Memory Bank
- Cyber entry point
- Centre of diversity
- Destination for leisure & culture
- Creator of knowledge resources

- Promoter of sustainability
- Promoter of Birmingham & the West Midlands region
- Resource inside presented on the outside
- The Library of Birmingham, a world class library for local people and The unique place for contemplation, inspiration, communication and innovation
Sunshine Library in Wakefield

- A unique library funded by SureStart for babies under 4 years of age and their parents and carers
- Serves the Lupset, Lawfield Lane and Plumpton communities of Wakefield
- For anyone who wants to introduce and share books with babies and young children
Sunshine Library : Aims

• To provide, promote and develop a flexible, quality libraries and information service, specifically targeted at pre-school children, their parents and carers within the designated SureStart area

• To implement the SureStart aims and objectives

• To reflect the aims and objectives of Wakefield Library & Information Service and its services to children
Sunshine Library: Objectives

• To promote and support the reading development of children through the provision of special collections of books, story tapes, videos and toys, regular activities and storytimes and guidance and advice on reading materials to parents from trained staff

• To target the hardest to reach families in a deprived area of the district

• To ensure that the library facilities and services develop and grow with full involvement of the SureStart community
Sunshine Library: Objectives

- To provide a wide range of resources in different formats
- To provide a flexible approach to the delivery of the service
- Ability to respond and adapt to the needs of the target group to ensure that there are no barriers to accessibility
- To encourage parents to share stories with their children from a very early age
- Encouraging early learning & literacy embracing the whole family & changing the families approach to libraries, books & learning
Sunshine Library : Objectives

- Continue to develop & improve joint working with SureStart partners & other agencies

- Ensure that the Sunshine Library meets the SureStart targets

- To plan & arrange promotional activities within the library & out in the community which encourage early access to books & early learning materials
Sunshine Library – What is in it?

• Board books
• Picture books
• Parent and carer books
• Storytapes
• Videos
• Computers
• Child & Parent friendly furnishings
Sunshine Library - Ethos

The library is here for you to relax and have fun with your young child – enjoy!
Sunshine Library – some satisfied customers
The Sunshine Library – A welcome for all
Moss Side Powerhouse Library in Manchester

- Purpose built youth centre for 9 – 25 years
- Exciting multi-agency facility including a library
- Range of partnership services
- Partners include – Libraries, Youth Service, Connexions, Colleges
- Culturally diverse community – high levels of poverty & deprivation, low educational attainment, strong sense of community spirit
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – Services Provided

• Well stocked library
• Listening station
• Homework centre
• Youth Club sessions
• Education & training opportunities
• Careers advice
• Personal advisors
• Support for excluded pupils
• Sport & leisure activities
• PC’s & Internet access
• Exhibition space
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – Services Provided

• Library at the centre of Powerhouse
• Housed in circular space from which radiates many of centres other facilities
  – Homework centre / IT suite
  – Art room
  – Music Studio
  – Connexions reception point
  – Access to the dance studio
• Library unofficial meeting point – positive image of library as a place young people want to spend time
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – Activities in Partnership

- Work with excluded young people
- Homework Centre – targeted one to one support & promotion
- Deposit collections in hostels for homeless 16 – 25 year olds
- Internet sessions for young refugees & asylum seekers – access sites in their own languages
- Summer Madness
- Transition Project
- Free Your Mind event

- Splash Extra Project with YOT – creative reading activities for young people at risk of offending
- Youth Service, Connexions, Colleges – highlight resources
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – Involving Young People

- Initial consultation – what did they want in the building
- Young People chose book stock, book buying trips, CD selection meetings, ongoing stock suggestions
- PC’s increased from 6 to 12 because of demand
- Represented on Powerhouse Board
- Young People’s empowerment group
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – Removing Barriers

• Aim to banish preconceptions of traditional library image
• Relaxed informal atmosphere
• Less bureaucratic approach to joining & usage
• Membership procedures kept as simple as possible
• No hire charges or fines for any library services for the 9 – 25 age group
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – A Success Story

- 700 active borrowers
- Approx 350 items borrowed each month
- Young People see the Powerhouse Library as an important part of their community
Moss Side Powerhouse Library – A Success Story

The Powerhouse gives us somewhere else to go, stops us being bored and is better than being at home where there’s lots of noise.
Idea Stores in London Borough of Tower Hamlets – Meeting Local Needs

• Question asked - what is needed in terms of libraries & adult education in the new millennium

• Extensive consultation with all sectors of the community

• Public wanted:
  – a high quality modern library service that provided a far greater range of services
  – Support for learning including childcare and homework help
  – new locations in shopping areas
  – Increased opening hours
  – Increased investment in books & IT
Idea Stores in London Borough of Tower Hamlets – Meeting Local Needs

• Consultation showed that libraries were a highly valued local service but people were dissatisfied with quality, location and nature of service:
  – perception that stock poor
  – Buildings seen as run down
  – Libraries inconveniently located
  – Not open at times people want them i.e. Sundays
  – Current service range not good enough
  – Massive demand for public computer & educational facilities

• Concept of Idea Stores born
Idea Stores - Strategy

• Idea Store Strategy developed
• £30 million investment - 7 Idea Stores all in shopping centres
• Ideas Stores are state of the art buildings with 2 core elements
  – modern library facilities
  – adult & further education
• Concept launched 1999
• 1st Idea Store opened, Bow in 2002
Idea Stores – Implementation Principles

- Each store would only be developed once funding was secured
- Adoption of strategy signals Council commitment to increase spending on libraries & learning
- Move to 7 day opening
- Net staff numbers in libraries would increase
Idea Stores – Implementation Principles

- Range & availability of lifelong learning course to significantly increase
- Fully accessible to people with disabilities
- Travel time to Store would be within 20 minutes for everyone in the borough
- Existing outreach services to be retained & improved
Idea Stores – Implementation Principles

- Council would cease service provision in sub standard or duplicating locations
- Programmed 5 year reduction of library service points - 12 to 7
- No library to merge until new or improved facilities were ready for use
- Capital receipts from sale of buildings to be invested into Idea Stores
Idea Stores – Promise to Community

• We are committed to a major investment programme to modernise your libraries
• Idea Stores will be built where people will use them & can get to them
• We will develop a truly customer focused service
• We aim to achieve seven day a week opening
• The Idea Stores are designed to enable everyone to fulfil their promise
Idea Stores – Services & Facilities

- Lending library services
- Facilities for wide range of adult education classes
- Homework Clubs
- Study spaces
- Drop in IT facilities
- Skills & careers advice for jobs or training
Idea Stores – Services & Facilities

- Café & refreshment facilities
- Art performance areas
- Art exhibition space
- Childcare for the children of learners – crèche
- Art & leisure activities
- Idea Stores Magazine via website
Idea Store – Bow

• First Idea Store - opened in May 2002
• Very positive feedback from local residents
• Visitor figures currently treble the number received by two libraries it replaced
• Book issues & course enrolments increased
• 30% increase in children’s membership
Idea Store – Chrisp Street

- Chrisp Street store opened July 2004
- Offers the Idea mix of learning & library services for all
- Again very positive response and use by communities
- 100% increase in children’s membership
Idea Store – Whitechapel

- Whitechapel will be the flagship Idea Store
- Will offer the fullest range of Idea Store services
- Opening late summer 2005
- Future Stores
  - Canary Wharf
  - Isle of Dogs
  - Watney Market
  - Bethnal Green
Idea Stores – A Success Story

I go with my daughter, Yuewu, nearly every day after school. I check my email on the Internet and search for jobs, while Yuewu chooses books and tapes from the children’s library. It’s a very good place and the staff help with the Internet when I need it.

35 year old parent

It’s much better than the old one. Me & my friends come in a lot to use the Internet for GCSE revision. I really like it and it’s good it opens seven days a week.

15 year old
The Reading Rocket Children’s Mobile Library in Derby

- New mobile for under 12’s and their parents/carers
- Particular emphasis on provision for under fives
- Service targets areas of deprivation
- Works in partnership
The Reading Rocket - Aims

• Give people a ‘taste of the library experience’
• Create library habit and reading culture in family
• Improve educational prospects by supporting literacy development
• Improve access & overcome barriers
• Reach out to communities in a more flexible & responsive way
The Reading Rocket - Objectives

• Increase library use
• Take Library to new audiences
• Establish links with community
• Develop links with partners e.g. SureStart
• Raise awareness of library services in community
• Improve Derby City PLS performance
The Reading Rocket - Stock

- Range of Children’s Books
- Parent/Carer collection
- Audio books, book/tape sets
- CD ROMS for loan
- Toys for use on vehicle
- PC’s
- Display area
The Reading Rocket - Operation

• Term Time Mon to Fri  9 - 3
  – Serving venues attended by under fives
  – Offering loans, storytimes, deposit collections

• Term Time Mon to Fri  3 – 5
  – Serving locations to suit primary children & parents
  – Offering out of lesson time reading clubs, study support, ‘stories on the move’, storytimes for older children, author visits

• School Holidays – links with other organisations and events
The Reading Rocket Children’s Mobile Library in Derby

Visits to the Reading Rocket - April 2004 to March 2005

(1) Month-by-month totals

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The Reading Rocket Children’s Mobile Library in Derby

Visits to the Reading Rocket - April 2004 to March 2005

(2) Cumulative totals

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![Bar chart showing actual and target visits for each month from April 2004 to March 2005.](chart.png)
Reading Rocket – Feedback from Users

The visit by the Reading Rocket is the highlight of our week

Nursery Head

Oh what nice books

Child
Long Eaton Library in Derbyshire

• Long Eaton Library in Erewash District of Derbyshire
• Undergoing a £600,000 modernisation
• Listed building so plans had to be approved by English Heritage & ODPM
Long Eaton Library

- Previous children’s area – bright but small
- New extension on building to create a lighter, brighter, children’s library
- New teenage area to be created
Long Eaton Library

- Child friendly furnishings
- Flexibility of furniture
- PC’s with free internet access
- Storybox machines
- Relaxed space with sofas for teenagers
- Listening post
Long Eaton Library

- Consultation undertaken with local children
- Task was to choose soft furnishings e.g. rugs, kinderboxes etc
- Due to open August 2005
Alfreton Library in Derbyshire

- Alfreton Library in Amber Valley District of Derbyshire
- Busy library on edge of the shopping centre
- Areas of deprivation, unemployment, low literacy levels
- Part of East Amber Valley SureStart programme
Alfreton Library

- SureStart Librarian appointed
- Consultation with SureStart families
- Identified that library important to them but it was not as suitable for under fours as it could be
  - Furnishings
  - Safety
  - Baby changing
  - Not welcoming - dull
Alfreton Library

• East Amber Valley SureStart Programme funding
• £14,000 to improve under fours area
• Launch event
• Success of refurbishment led to other funding support – Mobile, Heanor
Alfreton Library

- Redecoration of the children’s library
- New carpet
- Bright, child friendly furnishings
- Custom built child safety barrier with gate
- Baby changing facilities
- SureStart notice board
Alfreton Library

- Commissioned mural
- Dedicated Storybox PC for under fours
- Storage for library materials
- Toys, games and puzzles
- Lots of new stock
Alfreton Library

• Good example of what can be achieved in partnership for the benefit of the community
• Over 200 new members
• Increased number of visits
• Increased use and loans and use
What makes a good library for children

- Right ethos and philosophy
- Opportunities for children to experience enjoyment of reading and excitement of discovering knowledge
- Supports process of learning to read
- Provides events and activities
- Recognises differing needs
- Provides safe space and welcoming environment
“A house without books is like a room without windows. No man has a right to bring up children without surrounding them with books………Children learn to read being in the presence of books”

Horace Mann, 1796 - 1859
I read because one life isn’t enough, and in the pages of a book I can be anybody;

I read because the words that build the story become mine, to build my life;

I read not for happy endings but for new beginnings, I’m just beginning myself and I wouldn’t mind a map;

I read because I have friends who don’t, and young though they are, they are beginning to run out of material;

I read because every journey begins at the library, and it’s time for me to start packing;

I read because one of these days I may want to leave this town, and I’m going to go everywhere and meet everybody,

And I want to be READY

‘Why I Read’ by Richard Peck
• These for me sum up what libraries need to aim for

• Unfortunately too many children still live in houses where there are no books & the library therefore has a very powerful role to play in their lives

• Our libraries need to be places which have what children and young people want and need, where they feel comfortable coming, ensures they want to keep coming back and makes them ready when they need to be.
Websites

www.derbyshire.gov.uk
www.derby.gov.uk
www.manchester.gov.uk
www.ideastore.co.uk
www.birmingham.gov.uk
www.wakefield.gov.uk
Contact: Annie Everall OBE
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