

Library Review 2019 – Funding and support arrangements for volunteer run libraries 2020/21 and 2021/22

Appendix 2

Support needs of volunteer run libraries

1. Introduction

For the 2016 Cabinet report 'Library review 2016 – future support needs of volunteer run libraries' there was an extensive survey undertaken with the Associate and Co-delivered libraries. For the review in 2019, 3 survey questions have been repeated so that the results can be compared over time. These questions relate to 1) Challenges, 2) Fundraising, 3) Support needs. It has not been necessary to ask questions relating to finances as this information has been extracted from their monitoring returns.

2. Key Challenges

The challenges the volunteer library groups raised were principally relating to funding and income:

- Lack of other external funding and grants

Fundraising in what was classified as an Urban Priority Area is difficult as there is very little spare cash in the community.

- Not able to get grants for running costs

Funding for core costs is difficult to achieve so the Council grant is essential as it covers most (but no longer all) of these.

Without ongoing support we could face a shortfall in meeting our operating costs.
We note that grant funding is generally not available to meet operating costs.

- Uncertainty of grants and income

The only guaranteed income that we receive to maintain the library is from the SCC main grant.

Current revenue streams are well below those required to meet the full running costs of the library and we do foresee this position changing in the medium term.

In our last financial year, we managed, for the first time, to make a small surplus (excluding SCC main grant) and we are on target to achieve it again this year. However, this is reliant on fundraising and generous donations from the local community and local businesses, plus we need to be successful in applying for grants and running successful activities, none of which is guaranteed.

There is no regular source of funding to sustain the library so different pots of money/grants etc have to be found and this has been an ongoing challenge and is likely to continue to be.

- Uncertainty regarding costs under lease

At the moment, a combination of Council grant and our own fund-raising is sufficient. However, we are still clarifying the cost of compliance.

Any major unforeseen expense (such as a rewire or re-roof) would be problematic for us.

We are conscious of potential significant repair costs arising from our premises.

New building - could potentially take all resources our organisation has, if unnecessary demands are forced upon us by SCC

- Need to have the grant contributing to costs

Although we predict that we can ultimately survive without the grant, it will put a lot of pressure on our own fund-raising and income generation activities.

We are relatively confident that with the level of fundraising we have been able to maintain together with some ongoing support from the Council we can continue to operate effectively. We have shown that we can raise significant funds on a continuing basis but the resource implications of significantly increasing our levels of fundraising could be challenging.

- Having a grant gives confidence and stability

Removal of the library grant would be a severe blow. It gives us confidence that, whatever else happens, our most basic financial outgoings – business rates, utility charges etc - are covered.

To replace the library grant from other sources would increase the time that volunteers would have to spend on fund-raising activities so reducing the time available for other library management and service delivery activities

3. Fundraising

The range of fundraising continues to grow, with some avenues very successful and others giving little return.

The chart below shows the different fundraising activities for each volunteer run library (that gave their response).

Type of fundraising	BR	ES	FR	JO	TO	UP	GR	WA	WH	GL	BU	ST	total
Applying for the library grant		x	X	X	X	x	X	X		X		X	9
Applying for other external grant funding (not Council)	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X		X	X	X	11
Council Ward pot funding	x	x		X	X	x	X		X	X	X	X	10
Sponsorship/donations from businesses	X	x					X	X				X	4
Advertising		x					X	X					3
Fees and charges and donations for events and activities	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	X			X	10
Charitable raffles	x	x	X		X	x	X	X	X	X		X	10
Room hire	x	x	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	11
Book sales	x	x	X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	12
Other sales	x		X	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	11
Fundraising at fairs and festivals		x	X			x	X	X	X	X		X	8

Collection boxes in library or external venues	x	x	X	X	X		X	X			X	X	9
Crowd funding or similar scheme				X									1

This highlights that the most common income generation activities are:

- Applying for other external grant funding (not Council)
- Council Ward pot funding
- Fees and charges and donations for events and activities
- Charitable raffles
- Room hire
- Book sales
- Other sales

4. Support needs

The chart below is a tally of the responses from each library who responded, indicating how essential or not the support currently provided is.

Type of support by SCC	Essential	Fairly Essential	Not really essential but useful	Not needed
A library grant	9	1		
Advice and guidance on meeting statutory compliance, and building maintenance	6	3	2	1
Training programme for Management Committee, e.g. succession planning, fundraising, governance		4	3	2
Network meetings	3	4	4	1

Provision of the Symphony Library Management System	12			
Technical assistance on LMS (Jacqui Chase)	12			
Van delivery service for reserved books & other materials	12			
RFID (self service Kiosks) where installed	6	2	2	1
Allocation of new book stock	10	2		
Provision of I.T. equipment and free internet (peoples network)	8	1	1	2
Provision of photocopiers and printers	6	2	2	2
Help with problem solving/sorting out general library issues.	7	3	1	
Sharing information on SCC library services and activity, local and national initiatives such as the 6 book challenge.	6	4	2	
Support with publicity and promotion.	2	2	8	
Access to activities and initiatives run by the Young People's Library Service.	5	4	2	
LMS training for volunteers, including discarding	8	2	1	1
Compliance training, e.g. data protection, safeguarding	8	2	1	1

This highlights that the majority of support provided is essential for the Volunteer run libraries and this indicates the balance of the support package is about right.

The most essential support is:

- Provision of the Symphony Library Management System
- Technical assistance on LMS (Jacqui Chase)
- Van delivery service for reserved books & other materials
- Allocation of new book stock

The provision of a grant isn't in the top 4 because responses also come from Co-delivered libraries who do not get a grant.

Less essential areas of support are:

- Support with publicity and promotion.
- Training programme for management committee
- Network meetings

Comments on support provided

Below are the comments given by the volunteer run libraries in relation to the support needed.

Van delivery service for reserved books & other materials

This is a key part of the service we provide as we are only a small library and space for books is limited. Essential to enable sharing of stock and resources across the city.

Access to activities and initiatives run by the Young People's Library Service.

The Summer Reading Challenge is something that we feel is a vital part of the library year. Good to be part of summer reading challenge etc. We certainly use the Book Trust sticker books and starter packs for under 5's from Ann Frost. We run fun time / story time / chatterbooks / crafts / code club for children but don't rely on support from Library Services

Library Grant

Matched funding might be an alternative. Not allocated under existing co-delivery agreement. VLIS marketing budget allocation to continue. The financial projections in our ten-year plan assume a slowly-tapering grant from the council. Essential for covering core costs

Network Meetings

*Very useful with local libraries but attendance can be low. Also good with Assoc. of Community Libraries
We find the monthly “VLiS” meetings useful as a way to share expertise and maintain contact with library services*

Provision of the Symphony Library Management System

Yes, though we will continue with our own system in tandem to increase the book stock. Essential to enable sharing of stock and resources across the city. It's very important that we remain part of the city-wide library system

Technical assistance on LMS

Not needed all the time but when a problem arises we rely on Jacqui's experience and advice. Very much appreciated

RFID

Useful at busy times, but counter contact is essential. The RFID machines are essential for the efficiency and smooth running of the library service. A number of libraries do not have RFID installed so commented that RFID support was not applicable.

Allocation of new book stock

SCC book stock purchasing and allocation to continue at existing levels. Clearly very important to have new stock and we are grateful for the grant. If necessary though, we would have to fund-raise to buy new books. Important to have new stock that is available across the entire Sheffield Library network

Provision of I.T. equipment and free internet (peoples network)

Works well at present alongside our Wi-Fi for laptops. Looking forward to the new PC's. We have replaced the "peoples network" computers with our own due to severe problems with performance and lack of administrative access (e.g. to install software). We still need the four "staff" computers because they are the only ones that have the "symphony" client installed and can access the council's library management system.

Provision of photocopiers and printers

Printer only – this is required for printing from LMS. The photocopier is heavily used; we cannot offer public printing on this machine, so we have our own.

Support with publicity and promotion.

This has been weak in the past, but hopefully Sheffield Year of Reading will change that. We don't get any at the moment, but it would be good to have a city-wide outlet to promote events. More effective co-ordination and integration of marketing activity between volunteer-led and core Sheffield libraries. Marked as not essential because volunteer libraries' activities have not been actively promoted in Library Service publicity

LMS training for volunteers, including discarding

We have discussed at VLiS meetings that how to add books to the LMS would also be useful. Not been required since the very early days. Having our volunteers trained in the use of LMS is essential. We can do some of this ourselves for new volunteers. Being able to discard is important to avoid accumulating piles of unwanted books and to avoid passing extra work to Library Services

Compliance training, e.g. data protection, safeguarding

Really important. Again discussing with other libraries is also useful. We have had to do our own, mostly. Safeguarding training (geared to libraries) would be useful. We obtain this from other sources but useful to hear how Library Service addresses requirements

Advice and guidance on meeting statutory compliance, and building maintenance

Continued support from SCC P&FM for building maintenance and building/garden developments. Possibly in the early post-lease stages only, though updates would be useful.

Training programme for Management Committee, e.g. succession planning, fundraising, governance

We are a member of another body that provides this info. If these are with other libraries it is an opportunity to exchange ideas/experiences at the same time.

Sharing information on SCC library services and activity, local and national initiatives such as the 6 book challenge.

This would save us having to keep searching for literary anniversaries etc

Help with problem solving/sorting out general library issues.

Again great to have Darrel and Jacqui. We don't need it all the time but when an issue arises, it is helpful to get advice and support from Darrell, Jacqui et al.

5. Other Comments

Other comments raised in the consultation related to the model and future success and sustainability.

'We believe that the co-delivered model has allowed sufficient flexibility to innovate and improve whilst remaining part of a city-wide library service. We are hopeful that the existing agreement and close working relationship can continue to the mutual benefit of SCC and our existing and potential users'.

‘Whilst we are able to achieve a certain level of income from our own fundraising, it is difficult to see how a community like ours will ever be able to provide a level of funds that would sustain the library for the long-term. The support package currently in place therefore remains essential to the long-term sustainability and success of the library’.

‘Assistance from SCC and occasional visits from staff or local councillors can help to show appreciation of the volunteers. VLiS will continue to work together. Similarly it helps for all organisations, venues to work together if they are to be successful’.

‘Our Library is happy to forge its own identity, especially as far as our users and the rest of our local community are concerned. But despite the claims of our most vocal detractors, we have no desire to separate ourselves from or set ourselves up as any kind of alternative to Sheffield Libraries. Our fervent wish is to remain part of the ‘family’ of libraries in Sheffield, and to help maintain its standards and its reputation in whatever ways we can. Starved of finance and other resources, this task would become more difficult for us. This sincere aim lies behind the responses provided in this survey’.

31st October 2019
Libraries, Archives & Information Service
Sheffield City Council