

TOWNS & COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

Subject Heading:

A Literacy Strategy for Havering

SLT Lead:

Sarah Homer

Report Author and contact details:

Magdalene Royer
Magdalene.royer@havering.gov.uk
01708 433926

Policy context:

Living Ambition
Culture Strategy

SUMMARY

The Strategy sets out how the Council and partners will improve Literacy levels in the borough and includes an Action Plan that identifies the priority actions for the next three years. The Strategy set out how the Council and partners would improve Literacy levels in the borough and included an Action Plan that identified the priority actions for the next three years. This is an update report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable to this report.

REPORT DETAIL

The Literacy Strategy sets out a Vision for Literacy for the next three years: **‘For all in Havering to enjoy and feel confident in the English Language’**. The purpose of the strategy is to ensure better coordination of work to support literacy development in Havering.

The Strategy deliberately focuses on English because this is the language of the environment in which we all exist and relate to one another. Research has shown that English language proficiency is one of the key factors in supporting social integration

and community cohesion, as well as being important in an economic context i.e. helping people to gain and progress in employment..

Although the focus of this strategy is on English, it is important to recognise the need for communities to continue to celebrate their rich cultural traditions, including the continued use of their mother tongue, in addition to English.

This Literacy Strategy and associated action plan focuses on the following groups:

- Early Years (0-4 Years)
- Children 5-11 Years
- Young People 11-19 Years
- Adults with Low Literacy

Scope and Target Audience

Whilst the aim is to make literacy support available to all who want and/or need it, there are limited resources and it is necessary to prioritise key target groups for some actions.

Some of the organisations involved in the strategy, deliver, and will continue to deliver, literacy to people of all ages and backgrounds – a universal offer. Others focus on a specific age group or identified need.

The Library Service was restructured in 2015/16 to create MTFS saving of £894k with effect from 1st April 16 and some of the posts created in the strategy could not be filled, some posts were deleted and other reduced

This had a significant impact on the deliverable in the strategy, because of the lack of resources. However the Library service has seen an increase in footfall, the best in London Summer Reading challenge and are utilising the building in different ways to be of service and engage the community

1. Early Years (0-4 Years)

- 1.1 This strategy recognises the importance of supporting children and families at preschool stage in order to increase the achievement of early learning goals and facilitate the transition to primary school (i.e. school readiness).
- 1.2 The Library service had a large reduction in staff and opening hours of all Libraries, and this had a significant impact on the key objectives. HAVCO closed in September 2015 and was replaced by the Havering Volunteer Centre and all volunteer opportunities are forwarded to them for their database. Working with the centre and Reader Development team, The Library service have recruited and trained over 400 volunteers who provide a wide range of roles in Libraries.
- 1.3 Havering Libraries are top in London for having the most number of children read all six books they signed up for, in this year's Summer Reading Challenge. The 79 per cent completion rate is the highest in London – the average is 55 per cent.

1.4 The Summer Reading Challenge runs every year during the six weeks holiday. It is supported by library staff who recruited some 125 volunteers to talk to children about the books and reward them with stickers. Primary schools are also visited by the Reader Development team to promote the scheme and present certificates.

1.5 Activities in libraries such as Baby Bounce, Wiggle and Giggle and Read and Rhyme are very well attended and Langton's Registry office, on behalf of the Library service, continue to register all babies at birth and ensure new parents are giving the 'library pack'

2. Children 5-11 Years

2.1 With Havering's performance at all key stages above national averages, the literacy strategy will focus on narrowing the gap to ensure that effective support is provided to all children within the Borough who are identified as achieving below average scores for literacy.

2.2 Once again volunteers and partners are an integral part of Havering Libraries and allow the service, with staff, to offer a wider range of initiatives targeted at children.

- Reader Development Team, reduced from 8FTE, including a manager to 2FTE, have visited over 50 primary schools in the borough promoting libraries and literacy. They also offer curriculum based library visits.
- Reading Buddies support children with their school reading books.
- The Summer Reading Challenge encourages children to read over the summer and to share their opinions on their reading with somebody else
- Chatterbooks Reading Groups aimed at 7 – 11 year olds at 2 locations - sessions run by volunteers but prepared and supported by Reader Development Team.
- The Library Service works with a number of key partners including Arts Council, YMCA, Reading Agency and volunteers to deliver programmes aimed at supporting literacy.

3. Young People 11-19 Years

3.1 At secondary school level the challenge for young people, and for their teachers and parents, is that they become literate enough to access the curriculum during their secondary schooling and to progress into further education, training or employment. This is a difficult age group to keep engaged with reading for pleasure and an environment where there are competing distractions.

3.2 The libraries currently provide a wide collection of book stock suitable for young adults and free access to computers and free Wi-Fi which is utilised by the age group. The teen zones and teen reading groups were not as successful.

3.3 Havering College of Further and Higher Education, provides a range of services including:

- Adult Literacy entry provision
- Pre-entry reading programme
- Adult English and Functional Skills English Entry, Level 1, Level 2
- IT courses with embedded literacy
- Literacy workshops for adults on employability courses

3.4 Young people are involved in developing programme to support media activity in the libraries and in particular developing films for the libraries television system and managing content displayed to the public. In addition, working with the Youth Service, libraries will be central points of contact for young people for a range of things including information advice and guidance.

3.5 Maintain targeted provision for special needs schools delivered by Reader Development includes Corbets Tey who have classes visiting Upminster Library; Dycorts visits Harold Hill weekly for Bag Books and Ravensbourne have just started visiting Harold Hill monthly for Bag books sessions.

4. Adults with Low Literacy

4.1 Adults with low literacy skills are defined as those who experience problems with basic literacy and wider communication skills.

4.2 The importance of raising adult literacy levels will be reflected in the Borough's Employment and Skills Plan and is also recognised in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

4.3 The 'Books on Prescription' scheme to help people with common mental health problems, such as anxiety, depression, phobias and eating disorders are available in all libraries.

4.4. All libs have Health & Well Being Corners which increases the role of the public library service in supporting health, wellbeing and social care in Havering, including audio and e-books

4.5 Work with Romford Association for the Deaf to pilot a deaf reading group had very limited success and it will be reviewed again in the future.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

It was intended that the delivery of the objectives and outcomes included within the Literacy Strategy would be achieved from within existing Culture and Leisure Services budgets. At the time the proposals do not create any budgetary pressure within the

service. However, The Library Service was restructured in 2015/16 to create MTFS saving of £894k with effect from 1st April 16 and some of the posts created in the strategy could not be filled, the impact of which is the report detail.

Legal implications and risks:

Subject to the equalities impact of the strategy which is addressed below, there should be no legal implications from the report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

Not applicable to this report.

Equalities implications and risks:

Research shows that poor literacy skills are part of a vicious cycle of factors that lead to disadvantage and poverty of opportunity, therefore the improvement in literacy provision and coordination will help promote equality within the borough.

Literacy is important for everyone's aspirations and the growth of the whole community within Havering, and we will continue to offer literacy support to all. However, there is a need for the purpose of this strategy and associated action plan to identify themed groups for action. This Literacy Strategy Action Plan looks at the following:

- Early Years (0-4 Years)
- Children 5-11 Years
- Young People 11-19 Years
- Adults with Low Literacy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Library Strategy, 2013-15.